Emily W. Hickey
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The NANTUCKET *Scrap Basket*

THE NANTUCKET SCRAP BASKET

Being a *Collection* of *Characteristic Stories* and *Sayings* of the *People* of the TOWN and ISLAND of NANTUCKET, MASSACHUSETTS

Second Edition

Revised, Expanded, and Rearranged by

WILLIAM F. MACY

Boston and New York

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY

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DEDICATED

TO ALL

SONS AND DAUGHTERS

OF NANTUCKET

ROUND CAPE HORN

BY S. L.

Ask any question in this town,
Of any one, by night or morn,
The answer will be always found —
'Round Cape Horn.'

I ask the ladies where I call,
'Your husbands — are they here or gone?'
I get this answer from them all —
'Round Cape Horn.'

I asked a child I chanced to meet,
'Where is your pa, my dear, this morn?'
She answered with a smile most sweet —
'Round Cape Horn.'

I asked a boy as on he skipped,
'Where now, my lad, at early dawn?'
He answered (for he then had shipped) —
'Round Cape Horn.'

. . . . . .

I asked a sailor bound away
Where I should write when he was gone.
He said without the least delay —
'Round Cape Horn.'

I asked a merchant for a fee.
He turned and answered me with scorn,
'My property is all at sea,
Round Cape Horn.'

. . . . . .

I asked a maiden by my side,
Who sighed and looked to me forlorn,
'Where is your heart?' She quick replied —
'Round Cape Horn.'

. . . . . .

I asked a loafer idling round
If he would work, when, with a yawn,
He answered, 'No, until I'm bound
Round Cape Horn.'

. . . . . .

In fact, I asked a little boy,
If he could tell where he was born.
He answered with a mark of joy,
'Round Cape Horn.'

. . . . . .

Thus merchants, sailors, women, men,
The old, or children lately born,
To all you ask, reply again —
'Round Cape Horn.'

From a poem in a collection of old Nantucket verses.

PREFACE

THE first edition of this 'Basket' appeared in 1916. It may be said to have had its inception as far back as 1899, when during my first administration as president of 'The Sons and Daughters of Nantucket,' a social organization of former Nantucketers holding an annual reunion in Boston, it was introduced as one of the features of the programme. I had been collecting stories and sayings of this kind for some years, and I asked Miss Annie Coffin to read some of them at the reunion. Naturally they struck a responsive chord with such a sympathetic audience, and the following year others were presented. For many years thereafter, under the able handling of Miss Coffin, the 'Scrap Basket,' as it was called, was a popular feature of the reunion programmes. Upon Miss Coffin's marriage and removal from Boston, Miss Anna Gardner Fish took over the editorship of the 'Basket' and conducted it with increasing success for many years. While some of the contributions were sent in by members of the organization, its success was in a very large measure due to the zeal and discrimination of these two ladies in collecting and culling the material which appeared in the 'Basket' each year, and it affords me pleasure to accord to them this none-the-less cordial, though belated, recognition of their invaluable services and coöperation, without which this book might not have been possible.

During my second administration as president of the Sons and Daughters, after an interval of several

years, Mr. Roland B. Hussey, formerly editor of the 'Nantucket Inquirer and Mirror,' wrote to me, saying that he had a collection of Nantucket anecdotes which he thought of publishing, and asking if he might have access to the 'Scrap Basket' material. As the Sons and Daughters had been going through several rather lean years, and its treasury was then at a rather low ebb, I suggested that we combine the two collections and publish them in book form for the benefit of that organization. To this he readily agreed, and the book was published. It found a ready sale locally and among 'off-island' Nantucketers, and the edition was soon exhausted. A substantial profit was realized, which put the organization on its feet financially — since when it has flourished like a green bay tree, and is still going strong in its thirty-fifth year of existence, with an attendance averaging around two hundred at the annual reunions.

The demand for the book has grown steadily and the few copies available in recent years have been selling at a considerable premium over the original price, which would seem to warrant a second edition. My former collaborator, Mr. Hussey, having deceased since the first edition appeared, I have since acquired his interest in the copyright from his heirs, and have revised the original text, omitting some of the items which, for one reason or another, seemed to me of least interest or value, and adding many new specimens which I have collected in recent years.

W. F. M.

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THE NANTUCKET SCRAP BASKET

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

PERHAPS no better introduction to this collection of Nantucket stories and sayings could be selected than those oft-quoted (and quite as oft-misquoted) doggerel verses which purport to set forth the characteristics of some of the old island families. Their authorship, though somewhat obscure, is usually attributed to one Phineas Fanning, a man of some parts, who resided on Nantucket in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and who married, in 1777, Keziah, a daughter of John and Keziah (Folger) Coffin. The verses are as follows:

The Rays and Russells coopers are;
  The knowing Folgers lazy;
A learned Coleman very rare,
  And scarce an honest [1] Hussey.

The Coffins noisy, fractious, loud,
  The silent Gardners plodding,
The Mitchells good, the Barkers proud,
  The Macys eat the pudding.

The Swains are swinish, clownish called;
  The Barnards very civil;
The Starbucks they are loud to bawl;
  The Pinkhams beat the devil.

[1] 'Learned' in some versions.

Some one has said, 'All generalizations are open to criticism, even this one,' and as these lines are simply a series of generalizations, it is not to be presumed that they were ever meant to be taken seriously.

We certainly know that members of the Ray and Russell families followed other trades than that of coopering, Folgers were not infrequently more industrious than erudite, Colemans did sometimes acquire learning, Husseys were faithful in positions of trust, Coffins were on occasion quiet and Gardners vociferous, and so on through the list; though it may well be that the most conspicuous representatives of the respective names to the eye and mind of the rhymester at the time answered to the descriptions he applied to the clan as a whole. Perhaps the most comfortable assumption, for those of us who claim descent from any of the families enumerated, is that Phineas spoke truly only when he ascribed virtues to our ancestors, while in all other cases he was, let us say, mistaken.

A well-authenticated story comes down to us from early in the nineteenth century, wherein it is told that a Nantucket woman, on her departure for a visit with relatives in Brooklyn, was entrusted with a message from an elderly island dame to a cousin of the latter who lived 'somewhere on Long Island.' The parting injunction was: 'Thee has Pinkham enough in thee to remember it, Coffin enough to relate it, and if the Gardner does not predominate, Mehitable will hear from me.' This would seem to confirm at least the Coffin reputation for loquacity and that of the Gardners for reserve. As for the Pinkhams, since they 'beat the devil,' they might well be credited with long memories.

Apropos, we recall the deposition of a venerable

clergyman who spoke at one of the reunions of the Sons and Daughters of Nantucket a few years ago, to the effect that upon his betrothal to a fair daughter of the island a half-century before, his prospective father-in-law gave him warning of what he might expect in these words: 'My daughter, sir, has in her veins some of the blood of all the original settlers of Nantucket, and a queerer lot God never made! So be prepared for anything.'

Dr. R. A. Douglas-Lithgow, author of 'Nantucket: A History,' in an interesting chapter on 'Quaint Nantucketers,' says: 'They were a peculiar people, differing from others in manners and customs from the reaction of their environment.... It is from them have been transmitted those bright attributes of intelligence and character which distinguish Nantucketers the world over, and which, often above the average and occasionally tending toward eccentricity, are always forcible and ever individualistic.... Inherent humor is always a prominent characteristic of a Nantucketer, and in almost every case it is closely associated either with the sea or the gray fraternity of Friends, and in accordance with the elements of both as blent in his character.... A people distinguished by certain characteristics which are apparent to every "off-islander" during five minutes' conversation. Unconventional or eccentric might describe their idiosyncrasies, but quaintness is more expressive, and delightfully quaint they are.'

Many other writers and observers bear testimony to these characteristics and peculiarities of the islanders, and most visitors who come in contact with them are similarly impressed; so that it would seem that there must be 'something in it,' and that as a people we are, consciously or unconsciously, a little wittier,

a little quainter, or, it may be, only a little queerer than other folks. Perhaps the net result is a combination of all these qualities in varying proportions, intensified and accentuated by our isolation from the rest of the world, and by several generations of inbreeding — both of which, as is well known, tend to the development in a high degree of racial and family traits.

The attitude of the average Nantucketer toward this charge, if such it can be called, is one of amusement and complacency, tinged perhaps at times with a slight resentment that any one should consider the matter worthy of note. Recognizing the fact that he couldn't be different if he would, he is equally sure that he wouldn't be if he could. And there's an end on't. Certain it is, however, that Nantucket has produced many unusual and unique 'characters,' some of great and others of less ability, but in any case distinctive and quite unlike any others to be met elsewhere.

As Dr. Lithgow, in the passage quoted, has observed, the two strongest influences in shaping the character and habits of these people were the sea and the Quaker religion. Either of these alone would have left its mark, one which centuries could not altogether obliterate. The two together, interacting one upon the other, were bound to have a pronounced effect. It could not have been otherwise.

As the sea was always here, while the Quakers came some time after the settlement, the influence of Neptune antedates that of George Fox and his followers, so it may be well to trace first, through song and story and quaint saying, this earlier and perhaps stronger — because more universal — of the two influences upon the island character. The anecdotes

and expressions connected with the sea and ships are so many and so varied that only a comparatively small part of the vast store of available material can be utilized. The list might be extended to make several such books as this, but the compilers have selected those which seemed most characteristic as well as most indigenous to our island.

CHAPTER II

SEA YARNS AND SAYINGS

THE very earliest Nantucket sea story of which we have any record actually antedates the settlement of the island — by a few hours, at least. It is related that when Thomas Macy, with his good wife Sarah and their five children, made the famous voyage from Salisbury, on Cape Ann, to Nantucket, in the autumn of 1659, they encountered rough weather with heavy seas, and that Sarah, becoming alarmed, begged her husband to turn back — to which entreaty Goodman Thomas replied: 'Woman, go below and seek thy God! I fear not the witches on earth or the devils in hell!' Which would indicate that the ancestor of all the pudding-eaters was himself something of a fire-eater. Probably none of the party saw anything amusing in the remark, but there was a certain grim humor in it which befits the situation as we may picture it.

From that day to this Nantucketers have always been preëminently a sea-faring folk, and their main interests have been in or on the ocean. Is it to be wondered at then that the conversation of the old-timers savors of the sea and ships? The habit is quite unconscious to most of them — the nautical terms having become so incorporated into their everyday speech that it never occurs to them there is anything unusual about it. They never pull, they always 'haul'; they do not tie or fasten anything, they 'splice' or 'belay' it; they do not arrange a thing, they 'rig it'; they do not throw anything away, but 'heave

it overboard'; they 'back and fill,' they 'luff,' 'tack,' 'come about' and 'square away' on any and all occasions. Before engaging in any venture they first 'see if the coast is clear,' then, as they proceed, they 'keep the weather eye peeled' and always 'look out for squalls.' Then they 'sound it out' until they 'fathom' it. If they don't like 'the lay of the land' they 'give it a wide berth.' To be prudent is 'to keep an eye to windward,' but to be over-prudent to the point of timidity is to be 'always reefed down and standing on the inshore tack.' To be reckless and take too many chances is to 'sail too close to the wind,' and to be caught off one's guard is to be 'taken aback,' meaning to catch the wind on the wrong side of the sails — an exasperating and sometimes perilous experience for a mariner. Anything put by for a rainy day, or any provision against adversity or disaster is 'an anchor to windward,' while to be gay or foolish is to 'carry on' as an inexperienced or reckless navigator may carry on (sail). A telling rebuke of extravagance is the phrase 'two lamps burning and no ship at sea.' To overcome or to best an opponent is to 'take the wind out of his sails.' To be ready for anything is to be 'always on deck,' and so on *ad infinitum*.

Some day, perhaps, if you are an old-time Nantucketer, you 'tackle up' the horse and 'all rigged out' you 'cruise down along.' A 'mate' recognizes you by 'the cut of your jib,' and you are 'hailed' with the query, 'where you bound?' Replying that you are 'bound to the south'ard' or to the 'east'ard,' as the case may be, you are urged to 'heave to' or to 'come alongside.' Complying with the request, you are urged to 'drop anchor,' and to 'come aboard and have a gam'; so you 'make fast' and visit for a while,

till it's time to 'heave your anchor short' and 'get under way' for the next 'port.'

So the conversation goes, not always with the nauticalisms as thick as in the samples given, but always with the salty flavor of the sea. Less now than formerly, perhaps, for the times are changing; but much of it lingers yet in the speech of the older generation. Some of the old expressions are rarely heard nowadays. In former times a Nantucket mother told her children to 'splice their patience,' and if she went out, one of the older ones had to 'tend the kitchen halyards' in her absence.

Of a light-minded person or one who didn't amount to much they would say, 'Well I guess he'd come over the bar without camels,' while the expression applied to an absolutely useless fellow, 'he ain't good enough even to take in slack,' explains itself. An ill-fitting garment was said to 'fit like a purser's shirt on a hand-spike.' 'God made the food, but the devil made the cook' is a sailor's phrase, often borrowed to describe a poor cook ashore; and the expression 'we must take it as it comes from the cook' is, perhaps, another form of the same idea.

A certain Nantucket Quaker mother once denied that she ever used these nautical phrases, and told her children to remind her if they ever caught her doing it. The very next morning she gave one of them some eggs to leave at the house of a relative on the way to school with the words: 'Take these into Cousin Phebe's, and tell her I think this squares the yards with us; and thee must scud, for it's almost school time.'

Of course not all these expressions are peculiar to Nantucket. Many of them are heard elsewhere along the coast, and even far inland, and many of them, in-

deed, have become so much a part of the language that they are not recognized as nautical phrases at all. Of such are several already given — notably such terms as 'taken aback,' to 'carry on' or 'the lay of the land' and many others, such as mainstay, bulwark, chock full, etc.; but even of these, when their sense is grasped and understood, it must be admitted that their origin is obvious. Even the very common word 'landmark,' is a sailor's term, meaning a mark on the land by which to steer or lay a course. 'Landfall' was land sighted from a ship. Others not recognizable at all, except by the initiated, are constantly used. 'A1' or A No. 1' originated in the classification of wooden ships, being the highest grade in Lloyd's Register. 'First rate' was originally a naval term, applied to the old wooden line-of-battle ships. 'Skyscraper,' long before the day of high buildings, was the sailor's name for a ship with very tall masts. Even more surprising, perhaps, will be the statement that the term 'bitter end' is a very technical nautical phrase, that being the sailor's name for that part of the cable which is abaft the windlass bitts; so when the cable is let out to the bitter end, that is as far as it is possible for it to go; and it is only in very deep water or when riding out a gale at anchor that this occurs.

'To know the ropes' is obviously of nautical origin. It is said there are only seven 'ropes' on a full-rigged ship. Everything else which might be taken for a rope by a land-lubber goes by some other name, as halyards, clewlines, earrings, garnets, sheets, tacks, stays, buntlines, gaskets, etc., to mention only a few. So that to pick the seven 'ropes' from all this confusion of nomenclature requires an 'A. B.' degree in seamanship.

Another common expression, 'fagged out,' or the 'fag end,' is undoubtedly of nautical origin, that being the sailor's term for a rope which is untwisted and frayed at the end.

A 'fake' in its original meaning was a turn in a rope or a cable. Hence to 'fake' a rope is to lay it down in coils.

Examples of this nature might be multiplied indefinitely, and it is a fascinating study; but further discussion of the subject is hardly within the scope of this work, even if space permitted. Our language undoubtedly owes much to the sailors, who, while they may not have actually coined many of the words in question, have probably preserved many very old ones which would otherwise have passed into disuse and been forgotten.

SOME ODD SAYINGS

'Give a woman all the advice in the world and then she'll go ashore with both anchors on the bows' expresses the contempt of an old Nantucket captain for feminine judgment and capacity.

'The devil would have made a sailor if he'd ever looked aloft' is said of or to a man who gets things snarled aloft by not looking to see that everything is clear; and the first thing he knows everything is 'mops and brooms.'

'Nothing but hot water and ashes can be thrown to windward' is told to the green-horn, who needs only to try it once to learn the lesson.

Said of a gale off Cape Horn: 'It blows so hard it takes two men to hold one man's hair on.'

Of a captain in a tight place, from which it would

seem next to impossible to extricate himself, the sailors were wont to say: 'The old man's 'twixt Heaven and hell without halyard or downhaul.'

Of an incredible story: 'That yarn doesn't square by its lifts and braces.'

Of an over-dressed woman, displaying flounce, ruffle and furbelow: 'Here she comes, stud'n's'ls set alow and aloft.'

Similarly, of a sailor home from sea, with his pockets full of money rolling down Main street on his sea-legs, with a girl on each arm: 'There goes Jack, rolling down to St. Helena, eighteen cloths in the lower stud'n's'l, and no change out of a dollar!'

An old skipper, still hale and hearty, being asked why he quit going to sea, replied: 'Well, I thought when I got to the north'ard o' sixty, 'twas time to heave to.'

Another, being invited out to dinner, announced on his arrival that he was 'ready to fall to any time,' as he had 'come with a swep' hold.'

Still another old salt spoke of 'bending on a new necktie.'

'HULL DOWN'

Captain Stephen Bailey, partaking of an oyster stew at a church supper, called the waitress with, 'See here, my lass, can't ye get me some more oysters? These here are a day's sail apart.'

It was Captain Bailey who said, 'Once you start the standing rigging of a five-dollar bill, there's d—n little left.'

THEY PUMPED

The crew of a leaky ship, homeward bound for Nantucket, had become so exhausted with work at the pumps that they finally came aft and told the captain they couldn't stand it any longer and would have to give up. Expecting little short of death for such a flagrant breach of discipline aboard ship, their surprise may be imagined when the captain blandly replied, 'I don't blame ye a bit, boys.' Recovering from their astonishment, they asked, 'But what'll we do?' 'Pump and you'll float; quit and you'll sink,' was the response, 'and I'll sink with ye!'

Evidently they pumped, or the story would have remained untold.

After some such a voyage as this we can understand how the sailor felt who said he was going to shoulder an oar and march inland till somebody asked him what that thing was he was carrying, and there he would settle for the rest of his days.

ORTHOGRAPHY

It was always the mate's duty to keep the log aboard ship. When the good ship 'Aurora' arrived home the owners were somewhat puzzled on looking over the log-book to read in a good round hand at the top of each page: 'Ship Ororor, Lat. — , Long. —.' Calling the mate in, they asked him what it meant. 'Why,' said he, 'that's the name o' the ship.' 'But why do you spell it that way?' they asked. The mate studied the letters for a while, then he burst out with 'Well if O-r-o-r-o-r don't spell Ororor, what in —— does it spell?'

Another good one attributed to a Nantucket cap-

tain, but not vouched for as authentic, has been widely quoted, even Mark Twain having related it in one of his books. This is the story of

THE CAPTAIN'S PRESCRIPTION

Many old-time ships carried in the medicine chest what was called the 'symptom book,' in which were detailed such symptoms as were likely to develop in certain diseases. The diagnosis being thus disclosed, instructions were given to administer such and such a dose of remedy number so and so from the medicine chest. One day a sick sailor having developed the symptoms calling for number eleven, the captain found to his dismay that the bottle supposed to contain that number was empty. However, not to be stumped by a little thing like that, he administered equal parts of number six and number five to the amount of the dose directed for number eleven. The story has it that the man was pretty sick for a time, but that he finally pulled through, though whether owing to a strong constitution or to the captain's ingenuity, deponent sayeth not.

CURED OF 'PLAYING SICK'

The 'Nantucket Mirror' of February 28, 1846, tells of an old Nantucket ship captain 'now located far away,' who, being applied to by a lazy sailor for some medicine, said that he cut up a head of tobacco, steeped it in a pint of black fish oil, administered it, and 'put such an injunction' upon the fellow that he never troubled him again.

A QUESTION OF TASTE

Perhaps no Nantucket story is more widely known than the one celebrated in the verses about 'Marm

Hackett's Garden,' written by James T. Fields, the correct version of which, the islanders claim, is as follows: Captain Finney, of the packet sloop Penelope, had long made it his boast that he could tell where he was at any time by merely tasting the material brought up on the sounding lead. Obed Fisher, his mate, being more or less skeptical of his skipper's ability in that direction and wishing to put it to the test, took the lead one night during the old man's watch below, and after greasing it well, rolled it in a box of earth which had contained some Nantucket-grown turnips. Then, going below, he roused the captain from a sound sleep and thrust the lead in his face, exclaiming: 'For the Lord's sake, Cap'n, tell us where we be!' Touching his tongue to the lead, the skipper tasted a moment, then jumped from his bunk with a yell: 'Great Scott! Obed, Nantucket's sunk, and we're right over Dr. Tupper's hill.'

Here is the 'Marm Hackett' version:

THE NANTUCKET SKIPPER

Many a long, long year ago,
  Nantucket skippers had a plan
Of finding out, though 'lying low,'
  How near New York their schooners ran.

They greased the lead before it fell,
  And then, by sounding through the night,
Knowing the soil that stuck so well,
  They always guessed their reckoning right.

A skipper gray, whose eyes were dim,
  Could tell, by tasting, just the spot;
And so below he'd 'douse the glim' —
  After, of course, his 'something hot.'

Snug in his berth at eight o'clock
  This ancient skipper might be found,

No matter how his craft would rock
He slept — for skippers' naps are sound.

The watch on deck would now and then
Run down and wake him, with the lead;
He'd up and taste, and tell the men
How many miles they went ahead.

One night 'twas Jotham Marden's watch —
A curious wag — the pedler's son —
And so he mused, the wanton wretch —
'To-night I'll have a grain of fun.

We're all a set of stupid fools
To think the skipper knows by tasting
What ground he's on; Nantucket schools
Don't teach such stuff, with all their basting!'

And so he took the well-greased lead
And rubbed it o'er a box of earth
That stood on deck — a parsnip bed —
And then he sought the skipper's berth.

'Where are we now, sir? Please to taste.'
The skipper yawned, put out his tongue,
Then oped his eyes in wondrous haste,
And then upon the floor he sprung.

The skipper stormed and tore his hair,
Thrust on his boots and roared to Marden,
'Nantucket's sunk and here we are
Right over Old Marm Hackett's garden!'

SAVED BY A SONG

A stuttering foremast hand, seeing a shipmate fall overboard, rushed aft to tell the captain, but so terrified and excited was he that he could only mouth helplessly, 'B-b-b-b — !' 'Sing it, man,' roared the captain, 'sing it!' Whereupon the sailor (for 'tis well known that stutterers can always sing) chanted:

'Overboard goes Barnabas —
Half a mile astarn of us.'

HE WAS PARTICULAR

On a very rough passage across the Sound in the old Island Home, some of the more timid passengers besought an old Nantucket sailor man who was a passenger, to tell them if he thought there was any danger. 'Wal,' said the old salt, puffing away at his pipe, 'I've sailed on all the oceans [puff, puff]; I've been in 'bout every kind o' weather there is made [puff, puff], and in 'bout every kind of a craft [puff]; man and boy, I've follered the sea for nigh fifty year [puff, puff], but 'twould muckle me dretful to go to bottom in an old tub like this.'

HEADED OFF SHORE

Illustrating the difference between the sailor's and the landsman's point of view: Captain Coffin's wife had been seriously ill. A lady of the summer colony meeting the old Captain on the street, inquired after Mrs. Coffin's health. 'Oh, she's headed off shore now,' was the response. Meeting a Nantucket woman later, the 'off-islander' expressed her sorrow that the life of their mutual friend, Mrs. Coffin, was despaired of. 'Why,' said the Nantucket woman, 'I hear she is much better.' 'No, there's no hope for her,' said the first lady. 'I just met Captain Coffin and he told me so himself.' 'Why, what did he say?' from the second. 'Well, let me see, how did he put it? Oh, I remember. He said she was "headed off shore."' At this the Nantucket woman laughed heartily. 'It's quite evident that you don't understand our language. You should realize that the only thing a sailor is afraid of is the land. If the Cap'n says she is headed off shore, you can rest assured that he considers her out of danger.'

KNEW THE COURSE

The story is told of Captain Paul West that, coming on deck one day, he said to the helmsman, 'How does she head?' 'Nor'west by west, half west, a little westerly,' was the reply. 'Um-m-m!' growled the skipper, 'if you could get another west in that course, I'd give you a glass of grog.' 'Nor'west by west, half west, a little westerly, Captain West,' was the quick response. 'Come below, you rascal, when your trick at the wheel is up,' said the skipper, as he started aft, grinning.

There is an old conundrum in verse:

'The wind was West,
And West steered we.
The wind was right aft,
Now how could that be?'

Answer — Paul West had the wheel.

CHAPTER III

WHALE SCRAPS

THERE is a tradition that one of our forefathers, with the gift of prophecy, standing one day on what was later called Folly House Hill, said, pointing to the great ocean to the south, where a school of whales were disporting: 'There is the green pasture where your children's children will go for their bread.'

A certain eminent New York lawyer, who spent his declining years on Nantucket, took a great interest in the history of the whaling days. It is related of him that he once said to an island friend: 'What has often puzzled me is how they managed to carry fuel enough on those whale-ships to try out all the oil!' It had never occurred to him, strange to say, that the whale itself furnished the fuel to try out its own blubber — a fact which had often been cited as an excellent example of the secondary use of things. As the oil was extracted, the 'scraps' remaining were skimmed off and fed to the fire under the try-pots, so as long as there was any blubber to try out, there were scraps to try it out with.

It has even been said that these scraps were palatable, if not exactly toothsome. The compilers are unable to vouch for the fact, but they offer a few samples to the reader, who can judge for himself.

The expression 'gallied' is still current to some extent among the older generation of Nantucketers. It was a whaling term, meaning primarily frightened and excited, and withal uncertain what to do next. Its nearest synonym, perhaps, is the modern word

'rattled,' though it implies more of fear and fright than the latter term. If a whale became 'gallied' before being struck, it required much more skill and caution in the attack than would otherwise be the case.

There is a story of Captain Stephen Bailey (the same who demanded more oysters in the stew) to the effect that he was once called as a witness in a case in court, where Rufus Choate was counsel for the opposing litigant. During a somewhat severe cross examination by the great lawyer, the 'Cap'n' suddenly remarked good naturedly: 'Do you know, Mr. Choate, you remind me a good deal of a gallied whale.' Somewhat surprised, the lawyer asked, 'Why, how's that, Captain?' 'Well, when you go down, there's no telling where you're coming up again!' It is said that, for once, the laugh was on Choate.

Another common term was 'foopaw.' This is said to have been a corruption of the French *faux pas* and is believed to have been borrowed from the French whalers. To 'make a foopaw' of anything was to make a mess of it, to bungle it — as when a harpooner missed his whale, or having succeeded in 'getting an iron in,' to have the line foul or snarl. That was a dangerous 'foopaw' to make, as unless the line was cut quickly before the whale 'ran' or 'sounded,' it might mean death to one or more men in the boat.

As a case in point, the following quaintly interesting passage from the log-book of Peter Folger, under a date in the year 1761, is apropos:

July ye 29 we stowed away our whale. We saw 2 sloops to the Easterd, and we saw divers sparmocities and we

struck one and made her spout Blood. She went down and their came a Snarl in the Toe-line and catched John Meyrick and over sot the boat and we never saw him afterwards. *We saved the whale.*

Of course the saying 'There she blows!' would be quoted on every possible occasion by a people familiar with whaling, but the companion phrases, 'there she breaches!' (breaks water) and 'there goes flukes' (the tail) are less well known ashore, the last phrase meaning to show the tail as the whale 'sounded.'

While the call 'there she blows' was no doubt the original form of announcement from the lookout aloft on sighting a whale, old whalemen tell us that later on the 'there' was usually omitted. The first call was 'bl-o-o-ws!' long drawn out, with a singsong cadence, followed perhaps by 'she blows! blo-o-o-ws!' The question from the officer of the deck, as he jumped into the rigging, was 'whereaway?' and the response would come: 'three p'ints off the starboard bow,' or 'two p'ints off the lee quarter,' or wherever the whale had been sighted.

When an old whaleman was asked after his health, his reply was, 'Bung-up and bilge-free,' referring to the way casks are stowed in the hold of a ship; but if you happen to hear one say that he was 'pretty nigh fin out,' you can know that he has been very sick, or that he thought he was, for that expresses the condition of a dying whale when he rolls over on his side, showing a fin above water. The nearest counterpart to this expression we have now is 'about all in.'

To 'throw a tub to a whale' is to offer a sop to keep any one quiet, said to be a survival of a very ancient custom when approaching a sperm whale suspected

of being ugly, or perhaps only 'gallied,' to throw a cask overboard so it would drift toward the whale to distract its attention while the boat was approaching.

'Put that butter within darting distance, will you?' was the request of an old whaleman at the table, bread in one hand and knife in the other, as he scanned the intervening distance.

Tradition has it that no whaleman was expected to ask the girl of his choice for her hand until he had 'killed his whale,' and if she were of the better class of the island maidens, the wedding day was not fixed until he had won a command. 'She married him before he had a ship' was a reproach which no high-born damsel of spirit would venture to endure.

Of a particularly fine young woman it was said: 'she deserves an East India cap'n,' the popular impression being that such worthies were likely to be more than ordinarily prosperous and successful.

Soon after the Revolution a Nantucket whaleship visited London with a cargo of oil. The feeling against the Colonies still ran high, and 'Yankees were hardly *persona grata* in the old country as yet. As one of the whaler's crew, who happened to be a hunchback, passed up the street from the wharf, a British tar, coming up behind him, gave him a sounding whack on his hump with the jeering remark: 'Oi s'y, Jack, wot you got there, now?' 'Bunker Hill and be d—d to you!' was the tart reply of the Nantucketer.

SOME CONSOLATION

An oft-quoted story is that of the Nantucket whaling captain who returned from a voyage of three or

four years with a 'clean ship.' When asked what luck he had had, he replied — but let it be told in verse by Gustav Kobbé, who spent several summers on the island.

WHALER PLUCK

A whaler from Nantucket town
He had the worst o' luck;
He sailed far off around Cape Horn,
But not a whale he struck.

Three years he cruised, North, South, East, West —
From pole to torrid zone;
But when he laid his course for home
He'd neither oil nor bone.

Yet as he sailed around Brant Point
He set his pennant high,
And when he tied up at the wharf
He lustily did cry:

'We've come home "clean" as we went out
We didn't raise a whale;
And we hain't got a bar'l o' ile,
But we had a *damn fine sail!*'

It is quite evident that he was not a Quaker captain, like so many masters of Nantucket whaleships (and of whom more anon), but rather of the type referred to in the following anecdote.

A REASONABLE REQUEST

A mate reported to 'the old man' (as the captain of a whaler was always called, though he might be the youngest man on the ship) that a 'snorter and a blower' had been sighted in the distance and asked permission to lower and give chase. The weather

being rough, with a heavy sea running, the prudent captain responded, 'A snorter and a blower she may be, but I don't see fitten for you to lower at present.' The whale remaining in sight, after a time the mate again begged for the chance to try his luck. With an eye on the weather, the captain replied: '*If* she's a snorter and a blower, you may lower and be d—d to you, sir!' The mate returning an hour or two later, with the captured whale in tow, the captain's change of sentiment was most apparent, when he greeted his mate as 'a scholard and a gentleman,' with 'here's yer rum, and here's yer see-gars, for you've earned 'em.' But the mate was on his dignity. 'I don't want yer rum,' said he, 'no no more your see-gars. All I want is a little *cy*-vility, and that of the commonest d—d sort!' [1]

'PAY OUT, MOTHER!'

Nantucket boys all looked forward to the day when they could ship for a whaling voyage round Cape Horn. They thought, talked, and dreamed whales and whaling from their earliest years. A story comes down to us of a boy of nine who tied one end of his mother's ball of darning cotton to a steel fork, and tried to harpoon the family cat. As the frightened animal sought to escape, mother entered the room and picked up the ball. The boy, intent only on his 'whale,' shouted, 'Pay out, mother! pay out!! There she "sounds" through the window!'

[1] The above story has been widely quoted, and there are many versions of it. Theodore Roosevelt once used it in one of his speeches, but as he quoted a somewhat garbled version, I took the liberty of sending him a marked copy of the Scrap Basket. His acknowledgment, which came promptly, is one of my cherished treasures. — *The Compiler.*

WET LINE

In Mr. Joseph E. C. Farnham's book, 'Memories of my Boyhood Days in Nantucket,' he speaks of the little store kept by the respected, innocent, and inoffensive Quaker, Edward Mitchell, whither boys and girls would go for school supplies. Naughty boys would sometimes go in in pairs, and while one would engage the attention of the unsuspecting Edward, the other seizing the end of the suspended ball of string would start out of the doorway, with the line a-running, calling out 'wet line, Edward, wet line!' Not being mentally quick enough to seize the scissors and cut the string, he would stand gaping at it as it unwound, until the whole ball had extended itself up Main street or through Fair street opposite his store.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOR

A certain Nantucket whaling captain, being ashore on one occasion in an English port, encountered at a tavern an exceedingly offensive and overbearing officer from a British naval vessel. Though the Yankee was in no way looking for trouble, the Briton, who was rather far gone in his cups, seemed bent on picking a quarrel, and finally, claiming that he had been insulted, challenged our captain to mortal combat. In accordance with the code, a brother officer waited upon the mate of the Nantucket ship, whom the Captain had named as his second, to arrange the details of the proposed duel. Learning that, as the challenged party, the choice of weapons was his, the whaleman announced that he would meet his adversary at sunrise, and that the fight would be waged with *harpoons at ten yards*. The encounter was indefinitely postponed.

A BUSY STORK

Captain Peter Smith, of Nantucket, used to tell an amusing story of an incident occurring when, as master of the whaler Young Hector, of New Bedford, on a Pacific whaling voyage in 185– they spoke the Sea Gull, also of New Bedford, and commanded by Captain Nichols, who, as was often the custom with whaling masters, was accompanied on the voyage by his wife.

Captain Nichols went aboard the Young Hector for a 'gam,' in the course of which he confided to Captain Smith the interesting news that the Sea Gull was anticipating at any time a visit from the stork. Being inexperienced in matters obstetrical, he asked Captain Smith to 'keep company' (as the saying was) with him until the ordeal was over, in case he should need help. Captain Smith readily consented, but advised Captain Nichols that in case he could not be on hand at the critical moment, to turn the new arrival over to his mate, and devote his entire attention to the mother, with full instructions as to just what to do.

The two ships kept in sight of one another for several days, but one morning as day broke the officer of the watch on the Young Hector reported the Sea Gull bearing down on them with all sails set, flags flying, and Captain Nichols on the quarter deck ready to hail. A boat was lowered and Captain Smith went aboard the other ship, where from the Captain's story, supplemented by the mate's, he learned what had happened.

It seemed that the stork had arrived in the night and in something of a hurry. Following Captain Smith's instructions, the mate had taken charge of the infant, but before his attentions to it were com-

pleted, the Captain again opened the cabin door and shouted: 'Ahoy, there! Call the *second* mate!' The second mate was summoned, and in a few moments a second lusty youngster was passed out and both mates were busy. Captain Nichols returned to his job, but a moment later once more opened the cabin door, and called out: 'I dunno! I dunno! Wait a minute — I'm not sure it's over yet. Better tell the *third* mate to stand by!' Fortunately, however, for all concerned the third mate's services were not required, and Captain Nichols reported all hands doing well, so it is safe to presume that the main brace was duly spliced.

HOBSON'S CHOICE

Illustrating the dependence of the island families upon the Pacific ocean for a living, it was told that a wife whose husband's earnings from his last voyage had about disappeared, feeling the pinch of poverty, and noting that her rather lazy spouse showed no signs of replenishing the family larder, remarked one day, as she served the frugal dinner: 'Well, John, one or t'other of us has got to go round Cape Horn pretty soon, and I ain't agoin.'

A WARM RECEPTION

So accustomed to the long absences of their husbands from home did some of these wives become that we may almost believe the story of the one who is said to have looked out of the window one day, and seeing her husband coming up the street on his return from a four years' voyage 'round the Horn,' hastened to meet him at the door with the water pail, which she thrust into his hand with the remark: 'Hello, Si. Here, go get a bucket o' water. Dinner'll be ready by the time you get back.'

JUST A WEEK-END TRIP

Still harder to believe is the alleged reply of the captain who was about to sail on a comparatively short Atlantic voyage, when reminded at the last minute that he had not said good-by to his wife: 'Oh well, never mind, I shan't be gone more'n a year or so.'

POSTAL FACILITIES

Mail service in the Pacific was somewhat uncertain, as evidenced by the following correspondence between a whaleman and his wife.

From the wife: 'Dear Ezra, where did you put the axe?'

From the husband (fourteen months later): 'Dear Martha, what did you want the axe for?'

From the wife (two years later): 'Dear Ezra, never mind about the axe. What did you do with the hammer?'

OBEYED ORDERS

Another story is told of a rather tyrannical *pater familias* who, one cold night, noting that the fire needed replenishing, sent his young son out to the barnyard with orders to bring in a certain big log which had been lying there for some time. The boy returned in a few minutes to say that, though he had tried his best, he couldn't lift the log. 'What's that?' cried the tyrant, 'Now you git out there, and don't you come back into this house without that log!' The boy, who had stood about all he could of such treatment, and whose patience was about exhausted, went out, walked down to the docks, and stowed away on a whaler which he knew was sailing at dawn. Something more than three years later he returned to the old home port and walked up town to see the

folks. Passing through the yard, he noticed the same old log still lying there. Having grown in stature and strength, he shouldered it with ease, opened the door, and stalked into the kitchen, where the old man, who had long mourned him as lost, sat smoking his pipe before the fire. Throwing his burden down on the hearth, the boy greeted his dad with: 'There, Pa. There's your d—d old log!'

A NANTUCKET SLEIGH RIDE

A harpooned whale will usually 'sound' at once, often going down very deep and remaining under for the better part of an hour. On rising to the surface, he will often 'run,' that is, swim away at high speed, dragging the boat after him by the whale line. From time immemorial this method of marine travel has been known as a 'Nantucket sleigh ride' and a very exciting trip it can be.

One old whaleman given to 'drawing the long bow' once entertained an interested group of summer folks with a story the truth of which we do not vouch for, but we give it for what it is worth: 'We was fast to an old bull whale, an' the minute he broke water he started off to looard lickety-split. Sufferin' cats! How that whale did travel! We fleeted aft's fur's we could git, but even then the water poured over the gunnel for'ard and kep' us all bailing's hard's we could to keep her afloat. All of a sudden I happened to look aft, an' there was an empty whale boat follerin' in our wake astarn. For a minute or so she follered us close; then we gained on her an' gradually she fell off an' swung round into the troth o' the sea. The next wave struck her, an' smash! she went, all to smithereens, an' that was the last we seen of her.'

'But what was it? Where'd the other boat come from?'

'Wal, believe it or not! 'twas a mystery to *us* till we got aboard ship and h'isted our boat up on the davits. Then we see her plankin' was as clean as the day she come out o' the shop. You see that thar whale went so fast he pulled our boat clean out o' the paint, an' what we seen was jest that shell o' paint follerin' after us!'

WHALERS' 'SHOP TALK'

About the year 1800, a Boston man, on returning from a visit to Nantucket, told his friends that he had never heard of such a barbarous, cold-blooded lot of people as those islanders. When asked to explain, he replied: 'Well, I'll tell you a little conversation I overheard on the wharf between two apparently respectable citizens. One said to the other, "Have you sold your head?" to which the other replied, "No, not yet; I've sold my body and my bone, but I'm waiting for a better offer for my head!"'

PETER PADDOCK'S WHALE IRON

One of the most singular incidents in connection with the exploits of Nantucket's whalemen and whaleships was that of Peter Paddock. Captain Paddock struck a whale in the Pacific ocean and 'lost his iron,' the whale escaping. Thirteen years later, while on another voyage in the Pacific, he struck a whale and when it was being cut up, the iron which he lost so many years previous was found imbedded in the flesh. It bore his own initials 'P. P.,' and was easily identified as the lost iron. That Captain Paddock should strike the same whale after a lapse of thirteen years and thus recover his iron

himself was considered most remarkable by the Nantucket whalemen.

THE RULING PASSION

Seen (and heard) on one of the Nantucket wharves some years ago. An old whaleman spinning yarns to a group of summer girls. 'An' jest then,' the narrator was saying, 'he up with his flukes (them's his tail, ladies) and down he come kersmash! acrost the bow o' the bo't; an' up we went int' the air 'bout ten fathom, more or less; an' the nex' thing I knowed I was a lookin' down right into his gre't gizzard, big's a barn door, with the rows o' white teeth a shinin', an' me a fallin' right square int' the openin' — (dramatic pause). Chorus of 'oh's!' Then, from one of the maids: 'And what did you think of *then*, Captain?' 'Well,' (shifting his quid slowly to the other cheek) 'I thought he'd make 'bout a hundred barrels.'

NO WONDER THEY PROSPERED

During the palmy days of the whaling industry, when Nantucket's sperm and whale oil were lighting the world, her own streets were dark. Many attempts were made to get the town to introduce a street lighting system, but the proposition was invariably voted down at the annual town meeting. The unanswerable logic of the argument advanced by its opponents always carried the day. Stated briefly this was: that if the price of oil was low, no one could afford to pay the extra tax necessary, while if the price was high, it would be extravagant, and the town could not afford it. So they exported all their oil, and either groped their way about or remained indoors after dark.

CHAPTER IV

ANECDOTES OF THE QUAKERS

NOTWITHSTANDING the austerity of the Quakers and their well-known dislike and disapproval of anything approaching levity in a worldly sense, they had a shrewd wit of their own, kindly as a rule, but not without its sting of irony, too, at times. Many good stories are told of them and about them, from which we have culled a few which seemed most worthy of a place here. Including in their numbers at one time fully half the population of the island, and being, by virtue of their ability, thrift, and business acumen, the ruling element, politically as well as socially, no collection of characteristic Nantucket stories and sayings would be complete unless they were well represented therein, and they are entitled to at least one whole chapter in the 'Scrap Basket.'

As is well known, the Friends never used our profane names for the days of the week and the months of the year, each being known by its number. Thus we have the amusing incident of the Quaker schoolmaster who set the copy for the writing class on the blackboard in this wise:

> Beauty fadeth soon,
> Like a rose in 6th mo.

Also the Quaker who referred to the story of 'Robinson Crusoe and his good man, Sixth Day.' It has been suggested that to carry this rule to its logical conclusion we might expect something like this:

Third month winds and fourth month showers
Bring forth the fifth month flowers.

The Friends' version of the well-known jingle

Thirty days hath September,
April, June, and November,' etc.

will be of interest:

'The ninth, the eleventh, the fourth, the sixth
Have thirty days to each affixed;
All the rest have thirty-one,
Except the second one alone,
Which hath always twenty-eight,
Except in leap year (once in four),
When it hath just one day more.'

Equally careful were all good Quakers to avoid using the common plural form of the personal pronoun in the second person singular, though strangely enough, they (at least the Nantucket Friends) used the objective form ungrammatically in the nominative case. Thus, it was never 'thou dost' or 'thou knowest,' but always 'thee does' or 'thee knows' with them, and they were very strict about it. We do not vouch for the truth of this story, but it is said that a woman of the world's people who bore the name of Eunice Ewer was always referred to among them as 'Theenice Thine.' We are inclined to suspect some local wag among 'the world's people' was responsible for that.

CURSING BY DEPUTY

The captain of a Nantucket coasting vessel, who was a member of the Society of Friends, in attempting to dock his vessel at a wharf in New York found a Nova Scotia craft in his way. He used all his powers

of persuasion on the Nova Scotia captain to get him to move, so that he might take his vessel up to her place, but the Down-Easter was impervious to all entreaty. Our Quaker captain had for a mate a man who was somewhat noted for his fluency in the use of swear words, and when it proved impossible to move the Nova Scotian by kindness, the captain, whose patience was exhausted, stepped to the companion-way and called down the stairs: 'Friend Peter, come up here and use some of thy unadvised language on this man.' Then, handing the speaking trumpet over to the mate, he added, 'and don't spare thyself, Peter.' The mate responded with alacrity and to such good effect that a clear berth was soon opened for the Nantucket coaster.

BETTER OR WORSE?

Another Quaker, a ship owner, being much disturbed by the profanity of one of his workmen, said to him one day: 'Jack, I think if thee should wear my coat for a week, thee might cure thyself of thy habit of swearing.' Jack agreed to try it, and on returning the coat at the end of the week, the Quaker asked: 'Well, Friend Jack, did thee have any inclination to swear while thee was wearing my coat?' 'No,' said Jack, 'but I did have a terrible hankerin' to lie.'

A POLITE REBUKE

If the lie has to be passed sometimes, could it be done more diplomatically than in this instance? A sailor man who was sadly addicted to 'drawing the long bow,' as the habit of lying was called, was thus rebuked by an old Quaker: 'Friend Charles, if thee'd ever been one half as economical of this world's goods

as thee is of the truth, thee'd be the richest man in Nantucket.'

KEEP THE CHANGE

An old Quaker ship-master, beset by Malay pirates in the East Indies, noting a brown-skinned buccaneer climbing up the ship's side by a rope, reached over side and cut the rope, remarking quietly: 'Thee can have the rope, friend, but thee can't come aboard.'

DISINTERESTED (?) ADVICE

One of the Nantucket coasters, while running the blockade in Vineyard Sound during the war of 1812, was in danger of being overhauled by a boat's crew from an enemy privateer. The mate wanted to resist, and asked permission to mount a small swivel they had aboard, but the Quaker captain answered: 'Thee knows my principles will not allow me to take part in any fighting.' 'But, Captain,' begged the mate, 'will you go below for a few minutes, and give up the deck to me?' Seeing no harm, and possibly some good in this, the Captain agreed and disappeared below. The boat approached, the swivel was mounted and trained, but just as it was about to be touched off, a head appeared cautiously above the companion-way, and a mild voice said: 'Mate, if thee means to do any execution with that swivel, I'd advise thee to lower the muzzle a little.'

GOOD BUSINESS

When two well-remembered Quaker worthies plied the trade of tinsmiths, a man took a kettle to them to be mended. Calling for it, he asked: 'How much, Peleg?' 'Nothing, friend,' was the reply. 'Well,

well, I'll bring all my work here.' 'That's what I wish thee to do, friend,' answered Peleg quietly.

A MAN OF HIS WORD

One local artisan, in business on Main street for many years, if asked when a job would be done, would reply, 'Well, thee may call on Fourth Day.' If the customer called for the work on that day, and finding it was not finished, upbraided the shopkeeper for failing to keep his promise, the latter would reply: 'I did not tell thee the work would be done; I told thee thee might *call* on Fourth Day. I'm always glad to see thee.'

THE BEST NONE TOO GOOD

An elderly Friend once interviewed a local blacksmith in regard to the price for making him a carving-knife. 'Well,' was the reply, 'I can make you a pretty good knife for seventy-five cents; I can make you a better one for a dollar, but I can make you one that would cut the Devil's head off for a dollar and a quarter.' The Friend promptly replied: 'Thee may make me the dollar and a quarter one.'

INTERNATIONAL AMENITIES

Just before the war of 1812 a Nantucket Quaker shipowner presented a check of considerable size to the Bank of England for payment. The irritation and contempt which anything American aroused in the British capital at that time was intense, but the old Quaker was told to call later and his check would be honored. When he did so, he was shown two kegs of fractional currency and was curtly told that there was his money. Patience to count it the Quaker did not have, and his native shrewdness forbade his ac-

cepting it on trust; so taking a handful of coins from each keg he remarked calmly: 'Thee may deposit the remainder and give me a draft for it on New York.' After hours of counting and verification the task was accomplished, and the old Friend went calmly on his way rejoicing.

QUALIFIED PRAISE

A worthy Quaker housewife, noted, as were they all, for her habits of cleanliness and orderliness, decided after much deliberation and with many misgivings to leave her family in the charge of her daughters while she attended Quarterly Meeting in Newport. Upon her return she praised her daughters for their housekeeping, saying: 'Thee has done very well; but thee has put the pudding dish on the wrong side of the platter.'

'THEE THINK AND I'LL SAW'

A boy sent on an errand to an old Quaker carpenter found him sawing through the ceiling of his shop. The sight of the stern visage glaring down at him through the hole so startled the boy that he could not remember his errand, but could only stammer: 'Father wants — father wants — now — now, father wants ——' The carpenter, noting the boy's trepidation, finally said, not unkindly: 'All right, son; thee think and I'll saw,' and went on with his work.

FORCE OF HABIT

Cousin Eunice, one of the Quaker housewives who had a reputation in her day for being what was called 'nasty neat,' once entertained several friends at 'tea,' which meant supper in Nantucket. Having occasion during the meal to go to the kitchen for

something, she was gone such a long time that the guests, finally becoming anxious and fearing that something might have happened to her, decided to investigate. They found her with her sleeves rolled up, standing on a chair cleaning the shelves in the 'chiny closet.' 'Well, there!' she said, when discovered, 'I saw these shelves with all the dishes off of them, and I just thought what a fine chance 'twould be to wash them off, and — I'm awful sorry — but I clean *forgot* I had a party!'

HONESTY THE BEST POLICY

A Quaker had got himself into trouble with the authorities and the sheriff called to escort him to the lockup.

'Is your husband in?' he inquired of the good wife who came to the door.

'My husband will see thee,' she replied. 'Come in.'

The sheriff entered, was bidden to make himself at home, and was hospitably entertained for half an hour, but no husband appeared. At last the sheriff grew impatient.

'Look here,' said he, 'I thought you said your husband would see me.'

'He has seen thee,' was the calm reply, 'but he did not like thy looks and has gone another way.'

SELF-PRESERVATION

Uncle Christopher was a well-to-do Quaker, as well as a benevolent one. Uncle Al, his neighbor, was also a good soul, but not so well supplied in the way of worldly goods. Thus it frequently happened (the two men being about the same physique) that some of Christopher's half-worn clothing was transferred to Uncle Al. One day the latter, dressed in a long 'out-

side coat' of his benefactor, was passing through the street, when a bunch of lads, mistaking him for Uncle Christopher, commenced shouting, 'Good morning, Uncle Christopher!' Turning to them, Uncle Al said mildly: 'Thank thee, lads; thank thee. I trust the Devil will make the same mistake.'

ALL IS VANITY

A dear old member of the Society of Friends, one of the occupants of the rising seats, went to meeting on First Day in that calmness and serenity of demeanor which bespoke inner tranquillity of heart and mind. The alteration in his bearing when he returned home was so striking that it awoke consternation in his quiet household. He was undeniably cross; and no reason for his change of heart could be surmised, until at last he turned upon his innocent and solicitous wife, and blurted out: 'What'd thee let me go to meeting in my barn hat for?'

TOO EXPENSIVE

One of our well-known island Friends, after the Quakers had ceased to hold meetings, had long been a regular attendant at one of the churches of the world's people, but quite suddenly his attendance stopped, and a committee from the church called upon him to ask why. 'Can't afford it,' he replied brusquely. 'Can't afford it?' said the committee. 'Why, what do you mean?' Whereupon he answered somewhat irreverently: 'No, I can't afford it. I've lost umbrellas and pocket handkerchiefs enough going to such places.'

A TRUE REFLECTION

A Nantucket woman, brought up in all the strictness of the Friends' meeting, after her marriage de-

parted so far from Friendly usage as to admit into her house many articles which were ornamental enough to win the disapproval of members of her sect, who placed the ban on anything purely decorative, though if it could be shown that an article was useful, it might be permitted. A committee of Friends waited upon her to inquire into the presence of the alleged unseemly objects in her home. The lady was very clever, and found a plausible excuse for the presence of each article which aroused suspicion as they went through the house. Somewhat discomfited by their fruitless search for contraband, the committee finally arrived at the front hall on the way out; but there they espied a concave mirror. 'Now this,' said the spokesman triumphantly, 'what possible use can thee have for this?' 'That mirror?' asked the lady in tones of surprise. 'Why, that is the most useful thing in the house. That is to show thee how very *small* thee looks when thee comes on such an errand.'

PUTTING THE SURE IN INSURANCE

That very honest shipowner and financier, a member of the Society of Friends, Jacob Barker, being anxious about a ship which was long overdue, called at the office of one of the large marine insurance companies and, frankly confessing his anxieties and doubts of the ship's safe return, applied for a policy of insurance on vessel and cargo. The premium proposed was a large one, and the agents were anxious to underwrite the risk if they could do it safely. They refused, however, to give a definite answer at once, but asked for a few days in which to communicate with the home office, appointing a day later in the week when they would report. In the meantime

every avenue of information was worked for news of the missing craft, while as a safeguard against any slip, the policy was prepared and executed, ready for delivery the moment any definite assurance of the ship's safety could be obtained.

On the day agreed upon no news, favorable or otherwise, had been received by the agents; but that morning the honest old Quaker stopped in at the office on his way down town, to say carelessly: 'O, by the way, if thee hasn't made out that policy thee needn't, for I've heard from the vessel.' 'Well now, Friend Jacob, that's too bad,' exclaimed the insurance man, 'for the underwriters accepted the risk, and the policy is all ready,' and stepping behind the desk he took out the paper and handed it to our friend. The old Quaker heaved a deep sigh — somewhat noncommittal in its purport — as he counted out the gold for the premium, and, tucking the precious document safely away in his inside coat pocket, he remarked, still casually: 'Yes, I've heard from her. She went to the Bottom off Hatteras last month, with all on board.'

A MAN OF PEACE

Many other stories are told of Jacob Barker. Though a member of the Society of Friends, he was not a very strict Quaker, and though a just man, he was also a shrewd one, with a keen sense of humor, and a temper of his own which sometimes came near getting the better of his principles. It is told of him that on one occasion, having an altercation with one of his subordinates, he became exasperated and so far forgot his dignity as to threaten the man with a thrashing. He had already pulled off his long coat preparatory to carrying out his threat, when he was

restrained by other Friends who were attracted to the scene. Being later taken to task for his unseemly behavior, his wit came to his rescue. 'Oh!' he exclaimed, with just a suspicion of a twinkle in his eye, 'thee quite misunderstood my purpose. I was removing my coat merely for convenience in running away.'

FIAT JUSTITIA

Friend Barker lived and carried on business for some time in New Orleans, and a story comes from there which illustrates his shrewd wisdom. Certain members of the crew of one of his ships had salvaged a rather valuable hempen cable. Their plan was to sell it and divide the proceeds, but one sailor held out for a larger price for his share than the others were willing to accept. Relying on Jacob's reputation for both honesty and wisdom, it was finally agreed to refer the question to him as arbitrator. The majority proposed to cut off from one end of the cable the proportionate share to which the stubborn sailor would be entitled, but Jacob said: 'No, that wouldn't be right. Officers come first, and each man according to his rank. Begin at the end and cut off so much for the mate, so much for the second mate, and so on. That would bring Jack's share right here in the middle, so get a knife and we'll cut it out.' After further parley and deliberation, the crew came to terms and the cable was sold intact.

NO CLAIMANT

In the busy whaling days of Nantucket, when heavy drays loaded with casks of oil made their way to the candlehouse, 'Gran'ther B.,' a worthy Quaker of the town, had a large business in buying and selling

oil. Several cargoes arrived that were not satisfactory in the estimate of the old gentleman. They looked cloudy, and he made frequent inquiries as to the best method to improve the color, but to no avail. Finally a Frenchman came to town who dealt in wines and, rumor had it, knew how to clarify them. Now was Gran'ther B.'s time. Perhaps the same method might be used with his oil.

It was not long before interested dealers became curious, and one of them approached Gran'ther's right-hand man, Zimri, who tended the vats. 'What does the old gentleman use, Zimri,' asked the zealous friend, 'to make his oil so clear?'

'I can't tell thee.'

'Can't tell me?' he repeated. 'And there thee stands every day watching the vats.'

'Yes, but thee sees, when the oil is poured in, the old man says, "Zimri, I want thee to do an errand for me around the corner"; and there's always an errand,' sighed the fellow.

'Yes? Well, I'll tell thee, I'll give thee five dollars if thee'll find out the secret for me.'

A few days later Zimri was again interviewed. 'Well, how is it now? Thee knows it means a five-dollar bill for thee.'

'I can't help it,' groaned Zimri, 'it's always the same thing, "an errand around the corner."'

'Well, why doesn't thee go back some time and pretend thee has forgotten something,' was the next suggestion.

'I tried that once, but I did not find anything — just some empty papers,' answered Zimri in despair.

One morning Gran'ther B. seemed most reluctant to come to breakfast, and when he had disregarded

the summons of every member of the family, his wife went out with determined air to where he stood beside his casks, and said: 'Why is thee so late to thy breakfast?'

Lifting a restraining hand, he said: 'Sh, mother! some one has been prowling around these casks in the night and been scared off, for look —' and he held up a cane, dripping with oil, which he had taken from the cask.

'What's thee going to do with it?' she asked. 'Look for its owner, won't thee?'

After a moment's pause, the old man said with a sly twinkle, 'Not a bit of it. I'll never hunt for the owner, but I have a plan. I'll take that cane with me to meeting every Fifth day and First day, where on the high seat it will be seen by everybody.' It is needless to say that the owner never appeared, and the cane is now in the possession of Gran'ther B.'s great-grandson. (The wonderful clarifying solution that was added to the oil proved nothing more elaborate than common soda.)

SAFETY FIRST

When Signor Blitz, the sleight-of-hand performer, was in town, he went into the bank, where William Mitchell, the cashier, spoke with him, and said: 'I would like to see thee do one of thy coin tricks, Friend Blitz.' The latter said he would be delighted, and requesting the use of some coins, did a few stunts before the eyes of the astonished cashier, causing the silver to disappear and reappear at will. William looked on interestedly a few moments, and then turning to an assistant, said: 'I think thee had better put the rest of our silver in the vault, and turn the key.'

CALLING NAMES

A young girl of Quaker parentage, playing with a friend of a worldly family, became incensed with her companion, and expressed her indignation thus forcibly: 'Thee's a little thee, thou!'

IN COFFIN'S

Visitors to the island applied for accommodations at a boarding house kept by Quakers, and were met with this reply: 'Yes, thee can come to us, but we shall be compelled to sleep thee in Coffin's.' The visitors enjoyed the situation when the full meaning was grasped.

'CHASTISE 'EM IN LOVE'

Aunt Eliza Nickerson, who was a great driver, had in her employ a girl named Harriet. She often drove over to 'Sconset, taking Harriet, who sat 'in the tail of the wagon,' supplied with knitting needles and cotton, and not permitted to loiter any during the journey, Aunt Eliza frequently prodding the girl with her foot, saying, 'Knit, Harriet! Knit!! It is for thy good I kick thee.'

WITHOUT PREJUDICE

When the famous Portuguese bell was brought to the island, the Second Congregational Society raised three hundred and fifty dollars among its members to purchase the bell and install it in the belfry. Further subscriptions from the public were invited and about one hundred and fifty dollars more was raised. Among those who subscribed was Obed Mitchell, a Quaker, who said: 'Friends do not use bells for religious purposes, but as they are very useful in giving fire alarms, etc., I will assist in the purchase.'

The wisdom of the Quaker is attested to-day by the varied uses to which the bell is put.

ALMOST

The Honorable Walter Folger, the famous mathematician, whose astronomical clock was one of the wonders of his day, often became so absorbed in the work in hand, whatever it might be, that he would shut himself up in his study for days at a time, and it was hard for his wife to get him even to come to his meals. One of her woman friends, to whom she was once relating her difficulties in this respect, remarked that it must be very trying to have to live with such a man. 'Indeed it is,' replied Mistress Folger. 'Why, do you know, Abigail, sometimes I almost wish he didn't know any more than *thy* husband!'

QUESTION NOT DEBATABLE

Richard Macy, father of Zaccheus, had engaged to marry Alice Paddack, a single woman, he being at the time about 80 years old. On telling his son Caleb of his intention, the latter remonstrated on account of his father's great age, whereat Richard told Caleb that he misapprehended the reason for his call; he had not come to consult him or to get his concurrence — he merely came to inform him that he should marry Alice Paddack.

CHAPTER V

SOME NANTUCKET TRAITS

When all is said, perhaps the most typical characteristic of the average Nantucketer is a certain complacency, a comfortable self-satisfaction, and a general feeling of content at having been born and having spent his life in this most desirable place of abode. At its best, this is simply an intense loyalty to the place of his nativity and to all of its traditions. At its worst, it is a harmless pride, founded upon the belief that his particular island is 'God's own country.' Nantucketers realize, of course, that every one could not, in the nature of things, have been born on the island; so without being vainglorious, they yet sympathize in a kindly way with those less fortunate than themselves. This is expressed quite simply in the remark of an old man who had never been 'off-island' in his life, when asked if he did not want to go before he died: 'No,' he said; 'What would I want to go off-island for? Nantucket's good enough for me.'

Even the children early acquire this point of view, as is evidenced by two stories from the schools, one of a boy who located Alaska as in 'the northwest corner of off-island,' and the other who wrote of Napoleon: 'He was a great soldier and a great statesman, but he was an off-islander.'

During the occasional freeze-ups, when Nantucket is isolated from the mainland for days or even weeks, the sympathy expressed in many quarters for the islanders in being cut off from the rest of the world is more than reciprocated. The islanders feel that the

rest of the world loses at least as much as they do by the embargo.

ONLY AN OFF-ISLANDER

It is told that when the late Oliver Ames, one-time Governor of Massachusetts, whose wife was a Nantucket woman, came to the island to be married, he was accosted by a native, who asked him, without knowing who he was, if he had come down to the wedding. 'Whose wedding?' asked Mr. Ames. 'Why, Anna Ray's. She's a *Coffin*, you know; but he's nothing but an off-islander.'

On the day of Charles Sumner's funeral, a good Nantucket lady, hearing the affair discussed, is said to have inquired: 'Was he of Nantucket origin?'

An old lady on Tuckernuck, learning that a party of people had arrived on the island for a visit, asked her informant: 'Are they town folks, or furriners and philosophians?'

AN ALIEN

Another lady, not to the manner born, but whose husband was a native, was highly amused at a remark which was repeated to her to the effect that 'she's a charming woman, and we're very fond of her, but *he* is one of *us*.'

A LAW UNTO ITSELF

A 'stranger lady,' attending a popular service at one of the local churches, was much disturbed when they began to place chairs in the aisles after the pews were all filled and many people were standing. 'Don't you know,' she asked an old captain who was lending

a hand with the chairs, 'that this is against the laws of Massachusetts?' 'Well, madam,' was the reply, 'Massachusetts laws don't apply to Nantucket.'

REASSURING

All good Nantucketers want to sleep the last sleep under their native sod. One good lady, ordered to a hospital on the mainland for treatment, was quite sure she should die there. 'And then what'll be done with me?' she asked of a friend. 'Here'll be my house all shut up and cold and dark. Where'll I go? Oh, Jane, dear, if I could only be brought to your house. Say that I could, and I'll die satisfied.' 'Why, of course you can,' assented the warm-hearted Jane, 'Come and *welcome!*'

We are glad to be able to record that at last accounts Jane's hospitality had not yet been availed of.

Examples of this kind might be multiplied indefinitely, but enough have been given to illustrate the point, and many others will doubtless occur to the reader who knows his Nantucket.

Two prominent traits of the typical Nantucketer have often been remarked upon. One is the tendency to indulge in 'platitudinous ponderosity,' and the other is a habit of 'dropping into poetry in a friendly say.' A few notable examples of each of these characteristics are given.

The disposition to clothe their thoughts and ideas in flowery language may be due to the Quaker influence, for, while the Friends stood for simplicity in many things, the fear of appearing in any way frivolous or 'unseemly' in manner or deportment and the

effort to preserve their dignity on all occasions often led them to adapt a somewhat forced and stilted style of speech.

'COUSIN' ELIZABETH BLACK,

the Quaker school mistress, was wont to praise a pupil who had done well, in these words: 'Excellent! Excellent! Thee deserves a reward of approbation.' This good lady, on being offered by Cousin Charles Folger, the use of his horse and cart to convey her to his house for tea, admonished him solemnly to 'be sure and provide a skillful charioteer.' Later in life she kept a little notion shop in the west part of the town. One day a small boy opened the door and called out: 'Got 'ny jewsharps, Cousin 'Liz'beth?' 'No, my child,' was the reply, 'nor any other instrument of music used by Israelite or Gentile, ancient or modern, either for *di*version or *de*votion.'

SQUIRE HUSSEY,

lawyer, justice of the peace and real estate agent in the 1850's, or thereabouts, indulged his propensity for high-flown language in his advertisements in the local paper in this wise:

For Sale. A dwelling house situated on the Cliff. This notable headland commands an extensive view of the Sound, where vessels may be seen daily passing to and fro with accelerated velocity.

For Sale. A dwelling house on York street. This is one of the most popular localities of the town, in the midst of a refined and enlightened community. The Colored Methodist Society contemplates the erection of a house of worship immediately opposite, which fact will commend itself to all religiously disposed minds.

A BARBER'S AD

At the sign of the Eastern Pine,
Where the red and white combine.

John Peters, a descendant of the famous English Divine, Hugh Peters, informs all the tidy citizens of Nantucket that Apollo and the Graces came over in the last packet, and have taken up their abode at the corner of Pearl and Water streets. He officiates as High Priest in their temple, where it is his delightful task to adorn the outward man, to shave off excrescences and trim into proportion the shrubbery which nature has reared around the head pieces of mankind. By a judicious application of the scissors of discrimination, the soap of good nature, the brush of reform, and the razor of decision, he expects to bring about results, which like powers of the Steam Engine, are, as yet, only dreamed of. The grace of the Athenian beau, and the dignity of the Roman senator, shall be so intermingled in the grand contour of all who submit to his touch, that the toute ensemble cannot fail to kindle love, and command respect.[1]

As for the versifying habit we doubt if any community of its size anywhere has produced quite so many 'feet' of rhyme per capita. Nantucket has had many true poets, and some exquisite verse has been written by natives of the island. It is not, however, with such that the Scrap Basket would concern itself, but rather with the quaint and the humorous, not to say grotesque form which the tendency may at times have taken.

An early example of this trait is Obed Macy's proposal to Abigail Pinkham:

[1] *Inquirer*, July 4, 1829.

From a long consideration
Of the good reputation
Thou hast in this nation,
Gives me an inclination
To become thy relation
By a legal capitulation,
And if this my declaration,
May but gain thy approbation,
It will lay an obligation,
From generation to generation
On thy friend
Who, without thy consideration,
May remain in vexation.

To which Abigail is said to have replied:

On mature consideration
Of this unique narration
Of thy infatuation,
Without further hesitation,
With no coy dissimulation,
But with maidenly elation,
And perhaps some perturbation,
I agree to annexation,
And life-long assimilation.[1]

An advertisement of John Peters, barber, in the 'Nantucket Inquirer' of July 3, 1830, has been handed down. This effusion consists of twelve verses of four lines each, but a few will suffice.

Curling irons, best and common,
Suitable for man or woman.
Perfumed soap, both red and white,
To please the sense of smell or sight.

Razor straps and paste assorted,
Yankee made, likewise imported;

[1] Obed and Abigail were married in 1786, and had ten children.

With one side black, the other fair
They'll give an edge — 'twill split a hair.

Then please to call, pray don't pass by.
If I don't shave you smooth, I'll try;
My soap is soft, my razor keen,
To shave you well is what I mean.

I'll cut your hair in any style —
To suit a frown, a scowl, a smile;
To please your taste or Fashion's rule,
I'm an adept in either school.

Not so bad, John, for 1830. Much worse doggerel confronts us every day in the street cars, nearly a century later, and much less to the point at that.

Another old one comes to light, wherein William Harris advertises, in 1827, that he has taken the cellar under Major Bigelow's house,

Where he has opened his Oyster Shop
For friends to sit at ease,
While he'll supply them, cold or hot,
Or cooked just as they please,

to which place he invites a continuance of their patronage, and

Where they shall find, as usual, his utmost care is
That the public shall be pleased by their servant,

—Willam Harris.

One Thomas Easton, being incapacitated for hard work, earned a few dollars by making 'takers,' as Nantucketers always call those useful articles usually known elsewhere, as 'holders.' His friend George M. Bunker composed this 'ad.' for him in 1857.

In Sherburne Town there dwells a man
  Brung up among the Quakers.
So lame that he can hardly stand,
  He's took to making takers.
They're handy for all sorts of folks —
  The Brewers and the Bakers,
And all the other kinds of cooks,
  E'en to the chowder-makers.
Be nothing loth, bring on the cloth —
  Enough to kiver acres.
Come one, come all, give him a call,
  And take away the takers.

A RHYMING SKIPPER

In 1781 the sloop Good Intent, owned by William Rotch and others, and known at Nantucket as 'Copper Bottom' was seized for some infraction of the laws by order of the Board of War, then sitting in Boston. Ichabod Plaisted, the local naval officer, not knowing just how to indite his official report of the seizure, sought the advice of one Capt. Dowse, who, after learning the facts, produced the following, which was duly sent:

'Gents: Your orders respecting the Sloop Good Intent I received last night and straightway I went On board of said vessel, and in the State's name Made a seizure thereof; but soon after came Some riotous persons, whose names I could mention, Lock'd the men I had plac'd as guards in the round-house, And kept them confin'd there as snug as a dormouse. They instantly made what dispatch they were able, And soon stripped the vessel of sails, rigging and cable. She'd a cargo on board of codfish and inions. And a lot of sperm oil; in good Whigs' opinions Was destined direct to the isle of Jamaica, With two sets of papers, lest a cruiser should take her. In this state she remains and I await further orders — Which I beg you to hasten, to stop new

disorders. I need add no more lest time should be wasted. But remain, with respect.

Yours,
Ichabod Plaisted.

Old-time Nantucketers often quote that odd sign once displayed in front of a local store:

Nice white quart bowls of all sizes,
Ninepence apiece and all prices.

Still another sign read:

Stoves polished and Carpets beat
By Edwin Ellis, Farmer street.

Perhaps this custom may be attributed to the good (or bad) example of the editors of those early news sheets, who exercised their rhyming proclivities on the least provocation. Witness this gem from the 'Inquirer' as far back as 1822, when Mr. Melcher copies from an exchange the marriage notice of William Double to Ann Maria Single, and adds:

A prudent maid to change her fate
From solitary trouble.
She wisely left the Single State,
And turned into the Double.

Weddings seemed to be fair game for these rhyming punsters, and in the absence of more stirring matter for their brains and pens, they evidently searched their exchanges for opportunities to show their wit. For it must not be supposed that these brides and grooms so lampooned were local characters. That would hardly have been safe. Here are just a few of many examples to be found in the files:

Christopher Sutton to Miss Margaret Hands:

Pleasing facts of love requited
Here indeed is Hands united.

Robert Nott to Miss Sophia Dewdney:

Happy be fair Sophy's lot,
She once was single, now she's nott.

By the Reverend G. Blythe. William Merry to Miss Jane Stephenson:

When at the Altar hands are twined,
The hearts are joyful — very:
And so was Jane's when Blythely joined,
The parson made her Merry.

Samuel Moody to Miss Asenath Paine:

When Moody Samuel went to woo
His spirits to regain,
He made his fair one Moody too —
Though she lost all her Pain.

Thomas Allwood to Miss Sparke:

'If Cupid's heart were anthracite
It would not catch like tinder,
But when its texture is All wood,
A spark soon makes it cinder.'

Edward Byrd (82) and Miss Elizabeth Cherry (71):

'Old Birds like Cherries fully ripe.'

But perhaps the best of all was that of Editor Samuel H. Jenks, of the 'Inquirer,' author of many of the foregoing, who appended to the marriage notice of Miss Lydia B. Long, when that lady changed her name to Bourne, this delightful bit:

Said the bridegroom in haste to the bride-elect:
'Don't, Lydia, be long, for the torch of love burns!'
But she, more wary and circumspect,
Said: 'Is this the Bourne whence no traveler returns?'

POETRY IN BUSINESS

The late Reverend Ferdinand C. Ewer is authority for this correspondence between his grandfather, who was a blacksmith, and a customer who wanted an adze made:

Hazadiah,
I desire
That thou an adze would make me;
And when 'tis done,
Set down the sum —
The money I'm to stake thee.
I want an adze.

— Bartlett Coffin.

The reply:

I and my lads
Have made thy adze,
Though nothing have to boast on;
So take it away,
And the money pay;
'Tis cheaper than in Boston.
A Shilling.

— Hazadiah Cartwright

As Dr. Ewer, if now living, would be over one hundred years of age, and this happened to his grandfather, we can get some idea of how far back this trait showed itself among the islanders; but can we imagine such a correspondence between a local blacksmith and his customer in these days?

CALL ALL HANDS

Alfred Folger's seven sons were, it is said, summoned to the noon meal by their mother in this wise:

'John M. and Henry B.,
William A. and Hiram C.,

Alfred, Charles, and Roland D..
Wash up and come to dinner.'

We do not know the origin of this quatrain, nor the occasion it is supposed to celebrate, but it was often quoted in the old days, and every old Nantucketer will recall it:

They sang 'Old Hundred' on the sea;
The fishes heard the racket,
And wondered what the noise could be,
And who was on the packet.

Also this couplet:

'First a feast and then a famine,
And then out on the banks a-clammin'.'

TEMPORA MUTANTUR

A trait often attributed to Nantucketers is an extreme conservativeness toward anything new. The charge has often been made, and with some justification, perhaps, that every public improvement proposed has always been fought bitterly and that every possible obstacle to its realization has been placed in its way by a considerable section of the community. We are inclined to doubt if this spirit is any more in evidence among our people than elsewhere; for it is well known that this experience is almost universal with promoters of new projects the world over. The very fact that most of the modern public services have been successfully inaugurated here at an earlier date than in many far larger communities would seem to be a sufficient refutation of the charge.

Certain it is, however, that many of our elderly people, who had lived in the days of the island's maritime prosperity, looked with little favor upon the

metamorphosis which took place a generation or two ago from a great whaling port to a popular summer resort, and they felt that little good could come of the change. The summer people were in many cases partly responsible for this prejudice, for many of them were inclined to patronize the islanders in a way which was offensive to a proud people with a history in which all took pride.

Aunt Eliza Russell, who lived to the age of ninety-three years, seventy-seven of which were spent in the old home on Pearl street, where she went as a bride at the age of sixteen, was one of the most outspoken in her disapproval of the changed conditions which came to pass in her later years. On one occasion she answered a ring at her doorbell to find four ladies (?) standing on the doorstep, one of whom addressed her thus: 'We have been told that there are many old and curious things in this house, and we wondered if we might see them.' With all the dignity of her ninety years, Aunt Eliza replied: 'I am as old and curious as anything in it, and you can see me.' On another occasion, when told of the profits she might derive from renting her spare chambers to the summer boarders, she remarked, 'I think my income will keep me comfortably as long as I am likely to live, and I haven't the slightest intention of allowing "coofs" to get in between my sheets with their boots on!' That settled it, and her spare rooms were always at the disposal of her children and her children's children.

Of course there are many other characteristic Nantucket traits quite as well-recognized as those mentioned, but not perhaps so easily illustrated by anecdotes suitable for the 'Scrap Basket.' Of the really distinctive qualities of Nantucket people as com-

pared with others elsewhere, the compilers hesitate to speak as freely as they might, for fear of being themselves accused of that particularly typical one first mentioned in this chapter.

CHAPTER VI

LOCAL CHARACTERS

Of quaint, interesting and more or less eccentric characters Nantucket has produced so many that a mere catalogue of the names of these notables would occupy many pages. Judging by the early records, nearly all of the original settlers might be eligible to the list, and each generation since has produced its quota who have left their mark in the annals of their times. To mention only a few, with some samples of their idiosyncrasies, is all that space permits.

'UNCLE PILLICK' FOLGER

is one of the earliest. Of him, some local wag wrote the verses beginning:

'Old Uncle Pillick he built him a boat
On the ba—ack side of Nantucket P'int;
He rolled up his trousers and set her afloat
On the ba—ack side of Nantucket P'int.

His sea journal of some voyages on the sloop Grampus in 1751 is rich in philosophy of a quaint and original order, and interlarded with pious Latin phrases and quotations from the classics, which betoken no small erudition for a sailor man of those days. On May 15, 1751, he writes:

This day we fell in with the South Shoal, and made our dear Nantucket and thro' God's mercy got round the point in the afternoon. So we turned it up to the Bar by the Sun 2 hours high. — *Laus Deo.*

On another voyage July 14th, same year, he says:

We have killed two spermacetie's. Now for home, Boys. We have seventy barrels in our Hold — *ex beneficia divina.*

THE NEWBEGINS

Much has been written about this interesting and unusual family; but perhaps the best story presented concerning them was that by Dr. Lithgow in the 'Inquirer and Mirror' of September 2, 1911, and from that story we make several excerpts which will give the general reader some insight into their peculiarities.

Reference to the Newbegins usually has to do with the three sisters, Phœbe, Mary, and Anna, who were the children of James and Phœbe Nicholls Newbegin. Of these daughters alone we shall principally speak. They were always more or less eccentric, and as time went on, their peculiarities became more accentuated. They are said to have been good-looking and attractive, but their isolation and mode of living rendered them timid and reticent. They had few social friendships, beyond those involved in their regular attendance at Friends' Meetings and quiet visits of some of the Friends. Their education was crude and elementary, and they knew little of things going on in the outside world or even about them. They assisted in the duties of the house, gathered herbs and berries, sewed and wove, and looked after their hens, which were a source of the greatest comfort and pleasure to them.

Anna, the youngest, did all the marketing, and in her Quaker bonnet and garb, could often be seen walking to town from their home about a mile distant, with unsteady, zigzag gait, never passing a post or stump or tree without circumnavigating it three times in succession; nor would she step off a curb

without stepping off of it and going back and stepping off again. Phœbe and Mary were taciturn, apathetic, and melancholy.

For nearly forty years these simple-minded, eccentric beings lived contentedly alone. They were regarded as curiosities, and town people would bring visiting friends to gaze upon them in sympathy and wonder. Their home was of interest, and in its one front room lived a cat, hens, and the three old maids. Suspended about the walls were garments and Quaker bonnets, with iron and wooden utensils, while on the mantel-piece and other convenient points there was a heterogeneous collection, including an old shoe, one brown tea pot with broken spout, yellow pitcher without handle, dead chicken, untidy lamps, well-spattered tallow candlestick, and other remains of worthless bric-a-brac.

Anna was the talker of the family, and when she found nobody to talk to, would address the hens, which lived in the same room with the family. Some of these bipeds were regarded by her as almost human and intellectual, and she would talk to them accordingly, while others which were treated as pets would usually roost upstairs, but were frequently seen nesting on one of the beds, on the mantel-piece, or in Anna's arms. Favorites were designated by special names, as Martha, Hannah, Abigail. Hannah always gave notice of her intention to lay by a 'cluck-cluck,' which, when Anna heard, she would open a drawer in the bureau and Hannah would fly into it, and then it was nearly closed until Hannah would announce the object of her incarceration accomplished.

The simple-mindedness of these people is evidenced in the following fact regarding their brother George, who essayed to swim across Hummock pond, and

when two thirds of the way over became fearful he could not make the further shore, so turned and swam back again.

At one time Uncle Benjamin G—— had a fine hog killed and decided to send the hams to Mary L——, who made a business of smoking and curing them. He told John, his man-of-all-work, to 'take the hams to Mary.' Now John was a frequent caller at the Newbegins, and thought Uncle Ben intended them as a gift to Mary and her sisters, and took them there. Later, Aunt Rachel (Benjamin's wife) was calling at the Newbegins, when Mary burst out with: 'Rachel, Benjamin's legs are perfectly beautiful! perfectly beautiful! We have had them fried, we have had them baked, and we have had them in all ways, and thee may say to Benjamin that his legs were beautiful.' It was not until the puzzled Rachel returned home and reported this incident, that the fact was brought to light the hams had been innocently diverted from intended channels.

The following doggerel verses, written by some local Silas Wegg, about 1845, show quite clearly some of the eccentricities of the sisters:

On this little sandy isle,
A mile or two from town,
Live three aged sisters
The fame of whom resounds.
One of these sisters eighty-two,
Another most four-score,
And Anna, youngest of the three,
Her years are seventy-four.
In peace and comfort there they live,
Free from the care of wealth,
Enjoying more than many hearts
In happiness and health.

No husband ever smiled on them
To cheer them on their course,
But a life of single blessedness
Seemed to have been their choice.
They've never left their native isle
The world at large to see,
But seem as well contented
In ignorance to be.
Our steamboats they have never seen
Except at a distance,
Likewise our ships — those noble craft —
Have never met their vision.
Full sixty years ago, they say,
They visited our wharves,
The price of apples to obtain,
Also of beef and pork.
They make companions of their hens,
And nurse them with much care;
They share with them their humble home
And let them roost up stairs.
One of them walks sometimes to town
In order to procure
Whatever articles they may need
From Cousin Reuben's store.
It would please you very much
To see her in her walks,
As around a post she three times goes
In steps so quick and fast.
Gay visitors they sometimes have —
Also the slick and prim —
With pockets well-nigh bursting
With cakes and other things.
Could you but see the joyous smiles
Around Friend Mary's mouth,
And hear the trembling accents
As Phebe then breaks forth,
'I'm obliged to thee, friend!' Phebe cries,
And Anna looks her thanks,
While Mary hastens with the prize
As fast as she can tramp.

Upon the upper shelf she puts
The goods which they bestow
And then comes and seats herself,
The news in town to know.
'Tis then the numerous questions
In quick succession come,
About the folks in town
Also our friends at home.
And sometimes while you're sitting
Conversing with these three
About their hens and chickens,
You much amused would be —
Perchance will greet your ears
A cackling loud and shrill;
Sometimes a smart young chanting
Will make those walls resound.
When we speak of leaving
They press us hard to stay,
And make us promise often
To take a stroll that way.
'Now, come again, all on ye,'
Is Phebe's constant cry
As we, their mansion leaving,
Turn round to say good-bye.
Now, if there's anyone on this isle,
Who never has seen these three,
Delay no longer — visit them —
Repaid you'll surely be.

They lived to good old ages, and when they became unable to care for themselves, were removed to the Friends' Boarding House, on Main street, three doors west of Gardner, where they were looked after by the Society of Friends. Anna died August 7, 1853, at the age of eighty-one years; Phœbe, February 23, 1860, ninety-four years; and Mary, August 10, 1863, ninety-three years. They were buried in the Friends' Burying Ground.

AN OLD-TIME CONSTABLE

Way back in the days when our grandfathers were small boys there was a certain constable in Nantucket, who had charge of the little lock-up on 'Hay Scale Lane,' now Pine street. Any boys caught out after the nine o'clock curfew were impounded therein, and their parents were notified to come and take them home. The constable was somewhat infirm, and unless the boys were so awed by the official presence that they came at once on being hailed, he would try diplomacy on them in this wise:

'Come here, now! Come right here to me, every one o' ye; or I'll tell ye all something about your grandfathers that ye won't like to hear.'

COUSIN CYRUS FOLGER

was seen walking briskly down Main street, with both hands extended before him, palms toward each other. He was approached by several friends along the route who supposed he wished to shake hands. But he shook his head to each one, exclaiming: 'Don't bother me! I've got the measure of a pane of glass.'

BUTTS UP

Uncle Jed R——, a well-known character in the fifties, distinguished himself by shingling his hog-pen with the butts of the shingles pointing skyward. This innovation earned for him the nickname 'Butts up.'

One day, while passing Captain Joseph Coffin's house on Main street, he spied that mariner building a 'walk' on top of his house. Wishing to be sociable, Uncle Jed sang out, 'What'r'ye buildin' up there?' Remembering Jed's shingling exploit, the captain re-

plied: 'A hog pen.' 'Humph,' said Uncle Jed, 'better stay in it when ye git it done!'

REPARTEE

Amos Wood and Peleg West were two inveterate jokers, and each liked to get the better of the other. Amos was somewhat of a stutterer, and Peleg had a wooden leg. One day West observed his rival coming along the street, and remarked loud enough for Amos to hear him:

> 'Here comes Amos Wood
> Who never was known to do any good.'

To which Amos retorted

> 'And h-h-here is P-P-Peleg West,
> And his woo-woo-wooden part is
> M-much the best.'

THE DEVIL ON ONE STICK

Charlie Callahan also had a wooden leg. He kept a liquor saloon and was called 'the Devil on one stick.' On one occasion he was at a house about dinner time where a blackberry pudding was one of the parts of the meal. Callahan was not asked to partake, but saw through an open door what was going on. After the meal was over Charlie asked the head of the family, 'What they would take for that blagberry pudden, bein's it was second-hand?'

JOSEPH PERRY,

remembered by many who go back even one generation, was not a Nantucketer by birth, but a native-born Englishman. For many years he kept a hardware store on Main street. A lady who still spoke the

Friends' language had long waited for a special kind of an old brass latch which 'Joe' had agreed to order for her and to let her know when it arrived. Finally, exasperated by the delay, she went down to the shop, determined to bring matters to a head. Joe sat, as was his wont, tipped back in his chair, with his feet up, calmly smoking his pipe. The good lady opened up as follows:

'I suppose thee has done nothing about that door handle of mine yet, Joseph? Now I have waited about long enough, and I'd like to know if thee really ever intends to get it for me. Thee has treated me shamefully, and I am tired of it. Why doesn't thee say thee can't get it, and be done with it? Now, for the last time, is thee going to get me that handle?'

Old Joseph sat calm and unruffled throughout this tirade; then, taking his pipe slowly from his mouth, but without changing his position otherwise, he drawled out, as to the world in general:

'Lord! 'Ear that woman jaw! I tell ye now, as I told ye afore, it ain't a 'andle at hall, it's a latch; and I got it hinside.'

AN UNNAMED BUT ENTERPRISING MERCHANT

A story is told of a lazy Nantucket shopkeeper who was not inclined to give up his personal comfort or ease. Whenever he saw a customer enter the front door he would call out from his chair: 'Well, what is it? What is it? Because perhaps I haven't got it.' On one occasion a customer wished to buy a pail and inquired the prices of the different sizes hanging in a line from the ceiling. The shop-keeper, without getting out of his chair, designated each pail with his foot, saying: 'That is 50 cents; that is 62½ cents.' 'Well,' said the customer, 'I will take that one,'

pointing to the pail he wished to buy. The shopkeeper did not stir, and a wave of distress seemed to be passing over him. Presently, with an air of great perplexity, he said: 'No, I won't sell it, for I shall only have to buy another.'

PROFESSOR MARIA MITCHELL,

the famous astronomer and one of Nantucket's most distinguished daughters, could hardly be classed as a 'character' in the sense that some of these others are so named, but she was a woman of strong and original personality, and many good stories are told of her by her friends and acquaintances. She was once directed by her physician to use lager beer as a tonic. On her way to visit her sister, Mrs. Kendall, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, she stopped at a saloon and purchased a bottle of beer, which she later asked her brother-in-law to open for her. 'Where did thee get it, Maria?' asked her sister. 'At the saloon on the corner,' replied Miss Mitchell serenely. 'Why Maria! Doesn't thee know that respectable women don't go into such places?'

'Oh,' said Miss Mitchell, in the manner of one who has done all that could be required, 'I told the man he ought to be ashamed of his traffic.'

A gentleman who still cherished the theory of woman's incapacity for any attainment not purely domestic, once asked Professor Mitchell if she did not think that the delicate organization of woman unfitted her for the irregular hours which the night work in astronomy necessitated. 'Sir,' Miss Mitchell replied, in her deep masculine voice, 'my mother had more night work than astronomy will ever demand of any woman. She brought up eight children.'

A certain visitor to the island had a most ardent desire to see Maria Mitchell, and was gratified to learn that she would be able to do so at a home wedding which she was to attend with her hostess. 'But how shall I know which is she?' was the anxious query. Remembering that Miss Mitchell was of a pronounced brunette type, the hostess said hastily: 'She'll be the darkest person in the room.' This simple method of identification did not take into consideration the presence of the family servant, a mulatto woman. The interested stranger, upon joining the assemblage, looked quickly around and naturally settled upon the mulatto as best answering the description; so she advanced with outstretched hands to exclaim with fervor: 'Is this *our* Maria?'

CAPTAIN WILLIAM BAXTER,

who, for many years before the Nantucket railroad was built, and even for some time thereafter, drove the 'Sconset stage, was an inveterate joker and wag, and many are the good stories told of him by those who knew him. The following is one of his advertisements from the files of the 'Inquirer and Mirror':

Back-stir

Ancient mariner, by sea and land, has forsaken the former and confines his efforts no more to trackless wastes. His side-wheel craft, Swiftsure, will be launched Monday, May 11, 1891, for the season. She has been newly rigged, and is supplied with hard cushions for invalids and soft seats for sweethearts. Deaf ear turned to cooing and billing, all confidences strictly confidential, and no gossip repeated. Rates reduced to all parts of the island.

When Cap'n Baxter was conveying a party of visitors across the commons to 'Sconset on a dark

and foggy night, he would frequently stop, jab the handle of his whip into the road, and gravely taste the dust which clung to it. When inquiries were made as to the meaning of this eccentric performance, he responded: 'Why bless you, I know this old island blindfolded the darkest night that ever was. I just take a sounding, and I can tell to a foot where we are by the taste of the bottom.'

One of Cap'n Baxter's duties was the transportation of the mail to Siasconset, where the villagers could obtain their letters and papers by calling at his house. A complaint having been made that the sign 'Post Office' had been placed by Cap'n Baxter, without authority, over the door of his house, an official of the postal service visited the island to verify the charge. In the natural course of events he became a passenger (and the only one) in the Cap'n's good side-wheeler, bound for 'Sconset, and, quite as naturally, he had unbosomed himself to the Cap'n before the town was hull down. The Cap'n shook his head doubtfully. 'I live right there in the village,' he said, 'and I would be sure to know it if there was such a sign there, but I never saw it. However, the best way will be for you to see for yourself.' So he drove to Polpis and allowed the official to inspect personally every farmhouse in the place. 'You see,' said the Cap'n, 'there's no such sign here.' And the inspector, satisfied that the complaint was without foundation, was driven back to town and took the next boat for the continent.

'How blue the water is!' murmured one fair passenger making her first trip to 'Sconset on the Swiftsure. 'Why, there,' said the Cap'n, 'this must be

the day.' Somewhat puzzled, the passenger inquired, 'yes? what day?' 'Why, we like to make things look nice for you strangers, so about once in so often we tip a couple of hogsheads of blueing overboard, so as to make the water a pretty color, and they must have just done it today.'

On the way to 'Sconset, there is a small swamp hole by the roadside. Once when the Cap'n was driving two gentlemen out from town their conversation turned to feet, and each told the other how he suffered from corns. 'Well, now,' said the old joker, 'that's lucky. You've come to jest the right place. There's a pond a little way ahead that they call Corn Pond. There's some medicinal property in the water there that jest cures corns; but it's a funny thing, somehow or other, if you take the water away it seems to lose its virtue. So people come out here and sit on the bank and soak their feet. They say it does wonders for 'em.' The old Cap'n was so serious that the strangers were much impressed and asked him if he would be willing to wait while they took a treatment. Nothing loth, the Swiftsure came to anchor, the passengers removed their shoes and stockings and sat on the mossy bank with their feet dabbling in the water for an hour or more while Cap'n B. rested his horses and placidly smoked his pipe. Whether it was the Cap'n or the passengers who revealed the joke was never known, but to this day that particular pool is known to the old-timers as 'Corn Pond.'

Two young men, 'coofs,' who had heard of Captain Baxter's quips and jests, were most desirous of enjoying his fun at first hand, and for this purpose they

drove out to 'Sconset. It chanced that the first person they met on entering the village was the Cap'n himself, and to him they expressed their wishes. 'You have come at just the right time,' said the Cap'n pleasantly. 'Cap'n Baxter is to lecture this evening at the schoolhouse, and you'll have a chance to hear him there. But I advise you to be on hand early so as to get good seats.' As soon as the evening shades began to gather, the young men, with happy anticipations, betook themselves to the schoolhouse and sat down on the steps to await the opening of the door. And there they sat, and sat, and continued to sit while darkness settled around them and the village quieted down for the night. At last, becoming fearful that something was wrong, they returned to the village, where again they told their tale to the first man they met. The man laughed. 'I guess you've seen Cap'n Baxter,' he said.

When Cap'n Bill lay on what was apparently his death bed, his old friend, Joseph Clapp, an equally incorrigible joker, went to see him and condole with him. The old man was pretty far gone and very weak, but that did not prevent Captain Joe from having his little joke. On leaving, his parting words were: 'Well, William, I wouldn't hurry about leaving this sinful world. Thee'd better stay here as long as thee can, for thee's not likely to go to any better place.' Cap'n Bill took the hint, and his convalescence was rapid from that hour.

'JOE' CLAPP

above referred to, was an inveterate wag, and many are the jokes and quips attributed to him which are still quoted. When he wanted to be particularly dry

or caustic, as in the above-quoted instance, he had a way of slipping back into the Friends' language, which gave special piquancy to some of his most outrageous sayings.

Meeting Matthew Barney, Treasurer of the Savings Bank and one of the last of the 'Gurneyite' Friends, one day, Joe stopped him. 'Friend Matthew,' he said, solemnly, 'Thee knows that Paul said, "would thou wert as I am, excepting these bonds." Well, I've come to the conclusion that they were City of Jerusalem bonds, and that they were at a discount.'

Joseph went one voyage whaling in his youth, but being a man of rather comfortable habits, not over fond of hard work, he took life easy ashore for the rest of his days. One day in the Pacific Club, better known as 'the Cap'ns' Room,' he expressed the opinion that whaling was a lazy life. 'Now, Joseph,' exclaimed Captain Grant, one of the island's greatest whaling captains, 'you know better'n that. If it had been, you'd never have quit it.' And just for a change, the laugh was on Joe.

CARTED EVERYTHING

The late William H. Bowen ('Billy') immortalized by H. S. Wyer's famous 'Why Worry' portrait, was something of a wag. One day, while he was carting off rubbish for a 'Sconset family, some young girls thought to have a little fun at his expense. One of them said: 'Oh, Mr. Bowen, I didn't know you carted trash.' 'Yes, yes,' was the prompt response. 'Get in.'

(There are many of these instances of unexpected repartee from some of those supposed-to-be-simple

characters. It was not always safe to 'monkey with the buzz-saw.')

Only a few of the very oldest Nantucketers now living can recall a certain old-time fish peddler, who was one of the island's real characters in his day. The peculiar cadence of his call, 'Fre-e-sh Fe-e-sh!' is still remembered and imitated by one or two of the ancients. When, in the midst of a hard winter, everything was frozen up and fresh fish was 'scurcer'n hen's teeth,' there were always eels in the mud at the bottom of the creeks and salt ponds, which could be taken on a spear through a hole in the ice, and there was always a market for this delicacy. It is related that on one bitter cold morning, in making his rounds, he called at a house in the south part of the town where two very old ladies lived. Receiving no response to his repeated knock, he finally went in to investigate and found that both women had died during the night. This choice morsel of news, of which he was the sole custodian, gave him an even added sense of his own importance, but business was business, so he continued on his rounds, greeting each householder who responded to his knock with the cryptic utterance: 'Two old women froze to death and I found 'em. Want to buy any eels?'

DEBORAH CHASE,

afterward Deborah Morris, was a famous Nantucket character back in the eighteenth century. She was a very muscular young woman. On one occasion a man, evidently skeptical as to her prowess, offered her a barrel of flour if she would carry it home. She promptly accepted the challenge, picked up the barrel of flour, and carried it away.

At the time of one of the raids on Nantucket during the Revolution they had posted sentinels in the vicinity of her home so that it was difficult to procure water and her people suffered very much. At last Debbie's patience was exhausted, and she determined to procure a supply. Her father said, 'Thee had better not; thee will get a bayonet in thee.' She replied, 'I would as lief die one way as another,' and, seizing two pails, she started for the pump. Passing around a corner, she suddenly came upon a sergeant on guard who presented his bayonet to halt her. She flung one pail full in his face and knocked him senseless. She then passed on, filled her two pails with water, and returned in safety past the still prostrate sentry.

On another occasion she was passing near a group of young fellows who were standing near where some blubber was being tried out. One of them who had on his best suit, and who had looked sufficiently on the wine when it was red to make him a little reckless, announced his intention to kiss her. As he came up to her to carry out his boast, she seized him, and with a dexterous twist laid him flat on his back in a pan of oil which was cooling.

'CUR'US! VERY CUR'US'

Uncle Cyrus Hussey was employed to saw a limb from a tree, and (as has happened in other instances) sat on the limb while he cut, with the result that he and the limb came to earth together. Later, whenever questioned as to his escapade, his reply was always: 'Cur'us! Very cur'us!'

MRS. McCLEAVE AND HER MUSEUM

One of the most interesting characters of the last generation was Mrs. Eliza A. McCleave, better

known as ''Lizy Ann,' who had a small museum of antiques and curiosities at her house on upper Main Street — a Mecca for visitors for many summers. The collection was an interesting one, but the accompanying 'lecture,' delivered by the hostess herself, was much more so. It was largely in rhyme, and was delivered with an unction which was irresistible. Could it have been preserved in a talking-machine record, it would have proved one of the best sellers in the list. We can give but a little of it.

'This old shell comb, though not as old as Noah,
Yet, when fifteen, my sister Phebe wore.
She worked very hard to gratify her passion,
And when the cost was earned, 'twas out of fashion.'

'This glass tankard, though not a hundred years,
Grandmother's gift, as the case appears.
The pound of putty daubed throughout is meant
To serve for use as well as ornament.'

'These are ashes, supposed to be,
Which fell on various ships at sea.'

'These musk-ox bones, just seven feet ten from end to end
they measure;
Look up and view them at your pleasure.'

'The man who carved the carved ivory carved this.'

And again,

'This, ladies and gentlemen, is a horsefoot or king crab — botanical name, Polypemus; twenty-four thousand eyes on either side, but eventually nothing but a crab.'

'Lizy Ann knew every Nantucketer, of course, and when one of them accompanied her off-island visitors, her personal observations were apt to be amusing and sometimes rather embarrassing. On one occasion a

fair daughter of the island brought a young man from Boston. In the midst of the lecture, 'Lizy Ann suddenly inquired: 'Is this young fellow a beau of yours, Caroline?' 'Oh, no, no'; replied the lady. 'Is he going to be?' was the next question.

Once, when exhibiting two small figurettes, she is said to have remarked: 'Now, friends, take notice of these; one is Cæsar, the other Brutus. I am not sure which is which. (Turning to her assistant and understudy) Mary Lizzie, which one of them two was it got slewed?'

One of her best pieces — her *chef d'œuvre*, perhaps — was 'The Cedar Vase,' a long 'poem,' describing this article wrought by Reuben Folger at his shop on Orange Street. After reciting this effusion she often innocently added this interesting reminiscence: 'Many people have admired this poem. My cousin admired it very much. One evening he was here and I repeated it to him. He went home soon afterward, and was found dead in his bed next morning.'

SHE KNEW HIM

A certain Nantucket Micawber, whose promise to pay was as good for a dollar as it was for a thousand (and no better) came home one day and announced to his wife that he had bought a horse. 'What did you give for it?' asked the wife. 'Oh, I gave my note,' he answered blandly. 'Cheap enough,' quoth the wife. 'Why didn't you get a span?'

THE TOWN CRIERS

For many, many years, until quite recent times, Nantucket maintained one or more town criers, and much of the local advertising was done by that

method. Evidently all the criers were more or less of characters, and many good stories concerning them have been preserved.

This quaint couplet has come down to us from very ancient times, indicating, it may be, that the duties of night watchman and town crier were combined:

'Twelve o'clock and all's well,
Jabez Arey has beans to sell.'

STEPHEN MACY

One of the ancient criers was Stephen Macy, who seems to have been a man of resource. After making due announcement through every street and lane of the town for a local merchant one morning, he presented himself before his employer for the accustomed fee. But it was not forthcoming, and even after some discussion of the point the merchant did not seem inclined to pay for the service. So in the afternoon Stephen went out again and, revisiting every street and lane of his former route, he 'uncried' his morning announcement.

On another occasion, when the sailing packet for the mainland, owing to the exigencies of wind and tide, made her departure at the unaccustomed hour of three o'clock in the morning, Stephen shortly thereafter repaired to the local tavern, roused the proprietor, and asked him if any of his boarders wanted to leave by the packet that day. 'Why, yes,' replied the landlord, 'there are several who are anxious to get away.' 'Well,' said Stephen, 'tell 'em they can't, 'cause the packet's gone.'

CHARLES H. CHASE

There is a many-times-told story of Charles H. Chase, one of the criers during the sixties and seven-

ties of the last century, to the effect that on one occasion, after ringing his bell lustily and making his announcement, a rather fresh young summer girl called out to him from a boarding house veranda: 'Where'd you get your bell, Mister?' Quick as a flash came back the reply: 'Same place you got your manners, young woman — from the brass foundry!'

BILLIE CLARK

The most famous, because the best advertised by the write-up men, of all Nantucket's town criers, was the late William D. Clark. William was a 'queer genius,' and columns have been written about his eccentricities.

'Billie,' as he was always called, combined in one incumbent the manifold duties of a score of offices. He was news vendor, errand boy, window washer, bill poster, distributor of almanacs, hand-bills and general advertising matter, including free samples, all-round chore man and general factotum. In his day and time he was just about the busiest business man in town. 'Crying' was only incidental, and he could make half a dozen different announcements in one round of the town.

As the steamboat ran up to the wharf, and even before the hawsers were out, his bundles of daily papers were thrown to him. Ripping off the wrappers as he started up town, he glanced over the headlines, absorbing enough of the day's sensations to transform himself into a walking bulletin board. By the time he had reached the head of the wharf, with a toot of his horn to attract attention, he exploded into a monologue, of which a fair sample, from memory, would be something like this:

'Now comes the news to-night! Now comes the

news to-night! Awful fire in Chicago! City all burnt up. — Hundreds of folks drowned! That's down in Kentucky, the river — the river Ohio overflowin' — an' they can't stop it! — 'Nother severe murder in New York! Man killed his wife, then killed himself — both of 'em dead! Meat auction on the lower square to-morrow morning at 10 A.M., at 10 A.M., to-morrow morning, beef, pork, mutton and lamb. And don't forget, ladies and gentlemen, don't forget there's a big surf on at 'Sconset! Take the Nantucket railroad and go out and see it! Round trip, 50 cents. And there's consid'able goin' on! Grand Concert and Entertainment in the Atheneum Hall to-night, to-night at 8 o'clock P.M. Tickets, 25 cts., children, half price. And remember, remember the grand ball, grand ball at Smith's Hall Saturday night, Number Fours, Number Fours grand ball! And that ain't all, no; that ain't all! Don't forget my birthday — November 17th, that's the date, ladies and gentlemen, November 17th. Toot! Toot!! To-o-o-o-t!!!

It is useless to attempt any imitation of the eccentricities of elocution or articulation which characterized Billie's delivery of one of these tirades. It has often been tried, but it simply can't be done in print. Those who have heard him can reproduce it. Others must trust to the imagination or get some old-timer to impersonate the immortal William for their edification.

For many years Clark rendered a valuable service to the townspeople, which was entirely voluntary on his part, by announcing the approach of the steamboat. Day after day he climbed the many steps to the lookout in the old south tower, swept the northwest horizon with a powerful spy-glass, and as soon as he sighted the boat, he pushed his horn through

slides in the windows provided for the purpose on each of the four sides, and gave several loud and prolonged toots on his horn, which could be heard in every part of the town. Moreover, at daylight on every morning after a severe storm he was at his post in the tower searching the rips and shoals about the island with his glass for signs of wrecks or vessels in distress; and there is no doubt many a poor sailor owes his life to the relief expeditions which often resulted from Billie's vigils and the quick alarm given on such occasions. With all his peculiarities (and he had many) William D. Clark was a valuable citizen, and his place has never been and never can be filled. He died in 1909.

'AL' HULL

The very last of Nantucket's criers, Alvin Hull, was a born humorist. His wit was spontaneous, and he had the gift of self-advertisement to a remarkable degree. Having, on one occasion, completed the rounds of the town, and called for his pay, he greeted his employer thus:

'How'd you like the cry I gave you? Well, I tell you, I meant to give you a good one. I went out in the afternoon and I sez — Now if that ain't enough, I'll cry again after supper, when the folks are all out on the piazzas and down to the wharf. And there was something about the air last night that was jest right for crying. I sez to my wife when I stepped out-o'-doors, "It seems 'sif I jest *wanted* to cry." And then the hour seven-forty-five — I don't know what there is about it, but seems 'sif I could jest warble forth seven-forty-five.'

SOME LOCAL SIMILES

The speech of the older generation of Nantucketers is full of quaint similes, most of which refer to some old story. In some cases the story has been forgotten, while the expression still remains. We have succeeded in collecting a number of these odd sayings with the accompanying stories:

'AS MAD AS TUCKER'

Tucker was one of those gentle souls whose heart was bigger than his brain. His only relation and caretaker was a grandmother to whom he was as deeply attached as his feeble mental capacity would permit. When this poor innocent was seen on the street one day, crying bitterly, the compassionate neighbors hastened to inquire the cause. 'I'm so mad,' he sobbed. 'I'm so mad. Granny's dead and I'm so mad I don't know what to do.' The poor fellow could not even distinguish between his emotions, and although not wholly unsympathetic, the Nantucketers could not refrain from their inalienable right to seize upon a joke by using the simile, 'As mad as Tucker when his granny died.'

'AS WEAK AS ANNIE BURRILL'S TEA'

Annie Burrill was so flustered when she entertained the minister that she forgot to put any tea in the tea-pot, serving him with a nice cup of freshly boiled water. When asked if his tea was satisfactory, his reply was: 'It has no bad taste, madam.' Thus the expression became a simile for weakness in her day.

'A BILL OF EXPENSE'

Uncle Bihu Bunker and his good wife Aunt Ruth lived in a house on Main street that was known

locally as the Knife-Box, from its peculiar architecture. Aunt Ruth had been ill for some time. One day the old gentleman was on his way down town, when a friend inquired: 'How's Aunt Ruth to-day, Uncle Bihu?' 'Oh, there she lays, a bill of expense.' Hence the expression when a Nantucketer refers to some extravagant person or article as 'A bill of expense, like Bihu's wife.'

'UNCLE FRANKIE'S RICE'

Uncle Frankie thought he would have rice for his dinner one day. He was living alone, his wife being 'off-island' for a visit. He was not an expert chef, and poured into the kettle what he deemed would make a good 'mess.' The vegetable began soon to take on life, and it was not long 'ere Uncle Frankie had all the pans and bowls from the pantry heaping full. The Nantucketer keeps the story alive by using the term 'like Uncle Frankie's rice' to explain that somebody had too much of any good thing.

'AS BAD AS OLD SKITZY'

Skitzy remarked one day, 'Now, wife, that cheese is all gone, and I've had none of it.' 'Well, why didn't you eat some?' she asked. 'Why, I don't like cheese,' answered Skitzy.

'AS HANDY AS CALEB'S CHEESE'

It is said that Caleb Macy was (unlike Skitzy) so fond of cheese that he kept one hanging by a string in his sitting-room, 'so's to have it handy.'

'A POOR GAMALIEL'

Gamaliel, a poor good-for-nothing, coming home one night, said to his long-suffering wife: 'Well, I've

sold my horse.' 'Have you? What did you get for it?' 'Why — a cart!' Hence, the expression, 'a poor Gamaliel' has a deep significance to the Nantucketer.

'YOU HAVEN'T GOT DINAH PADDOCK TO DEAL WITH'

Dinah Paddock was a weak-minded woman whom the boys delighted to tease, when playing around her door. After she moved away, they began playing the same tricks on her successor, but she soon scattered them, saying: 'I'll let you know you haven't got Dinah Paddock to deal with.' This became a simile for efficiency for that day and generation.

'KEEPING STILL LIKE UNCLE JIMMY'

In the old days, when families laid in the winter's supply of beef and pork in barrels, Uncle Jimmy missed, little by little, the pork from the barrel which stood in the yard. He suspected a certain man, but said nothing.

Fourteen years went by, and one day, in talking of losses, the man whom he had suspected, said: 'Uncle Jimmy, you never found out who took that pork, did you?' 'No,' said Uncle Jimmy, '*not till this day.*' Out of this incident grew the well-known expression, 'keeping still like Uncle Jimmy.'

As evidence that the example set by Uncle Jimmy was not lost on certain of his successors, we offer the following story, which may be called

LET WELL ENOUGH ALONE

Back in the eighteen-fifties, when the famous steamship Great Eastern, the largest craft afloat up to that time, made her first trip to New York, several of the Nantucket whaling captains planned a trip to the metropolis together to view this latest wonder of

the sea. They put up at the old Astor House on lower Broadway and sallied forth to view the town. Somewhere in the crowds one of the party was relieved of his watch by a pickpocket. As the watch had been a present from his owners, and therefore highly valued for sentimental reasons, the captain tried advertising for it, offering a substantial reward 'and no questions asked.' The next day a polite stranger called at the hotel and produced the 'lost' watch. True to his word, the captain handed over the promised reward, thanked the stranger, who thanked him in return, and was about to leave when the captain said: 'I advertised no questions asked, but I would really like to know just how you did it. I thought she was pretty well belayed. Do you mind showing me the trick?' Nothing loth, the obliging stranger courteously complied, deftly removed the watch from the Captain's pocket again and handed it over to him. 'Well, well!' said the old man, as he replaced the watch in his pocket and 'belayed' it once more, 'that's pretty slick. You know your business, don't you? Well, every man to his trade.' And he shook hands with the stranger, who then took his departure. The captain rejoined his companions to relate his adventure, but when he started to demonstrate the pickpocket's method, alas! he found nothing to demonstrate with, for lo and behold! the timepiece was gone once more. So chagrined was the old fellow for having paid handsomely to be made a fool of, and so afraid that he would be the laughing stock of the old home town and never hear the last of it if the story ever got out, that he made each member of the party swear that he would never tell of the incident at least till he, the victim, was dead. So well did they all keep their word that the story

never came out till the last survivor of the group was approaching his end nearly forty years later, when he finally told it.

'NO MORE USE FOR IT THAN MEADER HAD FOR HIS TEETH'

A man named Meader, living during the war of 1812, applied to his neighbor for the loan of a hammer. Being asked why he wished it, he replied: 'To knock out my teeth. I have no need of them, for I can get nothing to eat.' Hence the saying among old Nantucketers, 'I have no more use for it than Nick Meader had for his teeth.'

A SHRINKING BRIDE-ELECT

Some one once asked Uncle Amaziah how soon his daughter Susan who had been betrothed for some time, was to be married. 'Oh, pretty soon now,' was the reply. 'She's only waiting for her gums to shrink.' The seeker for information was somewhat puzzled for a time until further inquiry revealed the fact that Susan had recently had her whole 'upper set' extracted, preparatory to having some new store teeth, so that she might make a good appearance as a bride. So when an engagement is unduly prolonged those in the know are apt to say, 'She must be like Susan, waiting for her gums to shrink.'

'I LIKE MY OWN WAY BEST'

Bill Munn was a menial in the employ of a lighthouse keeper many years ago. He was one day writing to friends, and finally, after a few moments of deep thought, asked a member of the household how he spelled sugar. He was told; and then responded: 'I have writ it "shugar," and I like my own way best.'

Hence the old-time Nantucketer, may, in his response to a query as to why he did not do a piece of work differently, be likely to reply: 'I'm like Bill Munn — I like my own way best.'

'COME PREPARED'

Another citizen (a resident of New Dollar Lane) is said to have enacted the rôle of preparedness. He had a near-by neighbor who was given to intoxication, and often there were drunken brawls on the premises. One night in particular things were a little more turbulent than usual, and there came the cry: 'Murder! Murder! Help! Help!' Hastening through to his back yard, he caught up the axe lying against the chopping block, and going to the back fence, mounted the lower stringer, that he might see into his neighbor's yard, and, waving his axe, shouted: 'I heard the cry of murder, and I've come prepared.' Whenever you hear a Nantucketer say he has 'come prepared,' you may know he refers to the above incident.

'I'VE GOT MY SQUANTUM[1] VEST ON'

An islander who liked the good things of this life went to a tea party at a friend's, and partook heartily of the goodies spread before him. His hostess finally urged him to have more, and he yielded to the gentle persuasion with the remark: 'Well, don't mind if I do, for I've come with my "squantum" vest on.' And he actually had worn a large size waistcoat, that he could cater to his taste without restraint. This has become a simile for a good appetite and capacity to match.

[1] See word 'squantum' in list of 'Expressions and Idioms,' Chapter X.

Here are two quite common local expressions, but we have been unable to locate the stories from which they originated:

'No more vote than Morselander's cat.'

'If Ann Eliza ever needed a coffin, she needs one now.'

Perhaps some reader can supply these for a possible future edition.

CHAPTER VII

MISCELLANEOUS SCRAPS

ANY WAY TO GET THERE

During the 'gold rush' for California in '49, hundreds of Nantucket men and many from off-island took ship direct from here to San Francisco. The following *bona fide* conversation was reported at the time:

Stranger — How much do you ask, Mr. ——, for a cabin passage to California?

Shipowner — One hundred dollars cash down in advance. But I can't take you — all full in the cabin.

Stranger — Well, suppose I go in the hold, how much do you ask then?

Shipowner — Eighty dollars; but I can't take you. Hold is full.

Stranger — But can't I go in the fore peak? What is the price of a passage there?

Shipowner — Eighty dollars, but I can't take you. Full, fore and aft.

Stranger — Well, can't I go aloft somewhere? and suppose I do, what will you charge?

Shipowner — We charge eighty dollars to go anywhere; but can't carry you aloft. Got to carry provisions there.

Stranger — It is a hard case, isn't it? But as I want to go tolerable bad, what'll you charge to tow me?

The shipowner retreated suddenly, and didn't make his appearance again until the vessel sailed.

SPECIE PAYMENTS

In the first quarter of the nineteenth century it was no unusual event for Boston banks to take the bills of country banks to the bank of issue and de-

mand specie. One day, without warning, the Boston agent arrived in Nantucket with $50,000 in Nantucket bank bills and demanded specie. The bank officers tendered him $70,000 in Boston notes and demanded the specie balance. The agent declined the tender, so while the tellers were counting out the specie the Nantucket bank officials sent an agent to Boston with the Boston bank notes and held back every vessel from sailing until he returned. And the Boston agent was compelled to wait until he saw the Nantucket bank gain $20,000 in specie by his attempted sharp practice.

POOR BUT PROUD

The fame of Nantucket's sweet-toned Portuguese bell, which hangs in the 'South Tower,' having reached as far as Boston at a time when a certain very prosperous religious society of the Hub was building a new church, it is related that the building committee of the Boston society wrote to the Nantucket society which owns the bell, stating that they had a fine new church and asking if the Nantucket society cared to sell its bell. The Nantucket society replied promptly, stating that they had a fine old bell, and asking if the Boston society wanted to sell its church.

TRUE ECONOMY

Two men met on the street one day, and in the course of conversation the one said to the other: 'How do you manage to feed your large family with your small income?' 'Well,' he responded, 'I'll tell you. I find out what they don't like and give 'em plenty of it.' [1]

[1] The above story was related by the Reverend Robert Collyer in the course of a lecture in a city far from Nantucket some years ago. A lady in the audience rose and confirmed the truth of the story, stating that she was one of the large family referred to.

AN IMPATIENT SWAIN

A dweller on the Hinsdale road wooed and won a fair maiden living on a farm in Polpis. It was arranged that the marriage should take place in town. On the nuptial morning the bridegroom hitched up and started for town. Meeting a homeward-bound Polpis rig on the road, he called out: 'Say, if you see Sarah Abbie anywhere along the road, tell her to hurry up.'

THE LAW AND THE PROFITS

A certain old mason of Nantucket, being asked to figure on a new chimney for a wealthy 'squire' who had the reputation of being rather 'near,' named a price which was as low as he felt he could do an honest job for. Still the customer was not satisfied and insisted on beating him down. He needed the work and was willing to sacrifice any possible profit if he could get 'a decent day's pay' out of it, so after considerable haggling, he took the contract at a figure which was far too low even for that. He built a first-class chimney, but it would not draw, and when the first fire was started the squire's house was filled with smoke. In a rage, he sought the mason and made his complaint. 'Well,' said the artisan, 'of course you must have known I couldn't guarantee the job at that price.' 'But what will it cost to make it right?' queried the now penitent customer, visions of a complete rebuilding of the structure at more than the original cost flitting through his mind. After some further bargaining the mason agreed to correct any fault in the chimney and guarantee the job for an additional twenty dollars, which was about the amount of profit he had figured in his original estimate. The following day, when the customer was

down town, the mason climbed to the roof of the house, tied a brick to the end of a piece of twine and dropped it down the chimney from the top. A few well-directed strokes with the brick smashed the light of glass he had carefully set in the flue, and the chimney 'drew' perfectly forever after.

THAT SECOND-HAND PULPIT

There are several different versions of this tale, two or three of which have found their way into the 'Scrap Basket.' They vary, however, only as to the store where it happened, and the place where the pulpit came from. The story is that a certain shopkeeper, who shall be nameless, carried such a varied line that it was hard to think of anything which he could not produce. So famous in this respect did the shop become that finally a wager was made between two citizens that one could not ask for anything which the proprietor did not have in stock. Going into the store, the spokesman said: 'We've called to see if you happened to have a second-hand pulpit.' 'Why, yes,' was the reply; 'now you speak of it, I believe I have; but I never expected to sell it, and I'd pretty near forgotten I had it. When they took down the old Teazer Meeting House, I bought the pulpit, and I've got it up garret. I'll bring it down.' The loser paid his bet, and paid for the pulpit as well, though 'he had no more use for it than Nick Meader had for his teeth.'

A FAIRLY BUSY LIFE

'Rachael Bunker died 17th 1st mo., 1796, aged 80 years, 7 months, 3 days. She had 12 children, 113 grandchildren and 98 great-grandchildren. About 33 years of her life was devoted to public

service, during which she assisted at the birth of 2994 children, among them 31 pairs of twins.' — From a memorandum found recently in an old Nantucket house.

NOT TOO MUCH AT A TIME

Uncle James's son Theophilus, who was in 'foreign parts,' wrote a letter to his mother. After the lamp was lighted in the sitting-room, she put on her specs, and sat down to read it aloud to the family. After she had read a page or two Uncle James stopped her, saying, 'There, that'll do for this time, mother; now put it on the mantel, put the whetstone over it, and finish reading it to-morrow.' Being a dutiful wife, she obeyed, and the family had to wait for the second installment.

RICH, BUT HUMBLE

There is a story which has been attributed to several different local plutocrats at various times, but the story itself is probably older than some of its alleged heroes. It first appeared in the 'Worcester Yeoman' in November, 1828, and was related as an example of the democracy existing in Nantucket. Some strangers, landing at the wharf, noticed two elderly men with a cart, and at once piled their luggage aboard and ordered it delivered at a certain boarding house in the town. When the cart arrived, the strangers ordered the various articles disposed of according to their wishes, but on asking for the bill, their surprise may be imagined when they were informed that there was no charge for the service and that if any further work of the kind was needed, to call on Mr. —— and Captain ——. Inquiry soon revealed the fact that the strangers had employed

two of the richest men on the island, who seemed to enjoy the joke even more than their employers, who had profited by the service rendered.

GATHERINGS

The late John Rand, remembered as an incorrigible joker, was one of the many Nantucket men who enlisted early in the Civil War, going out with the Twentieth Regiment, M.V.M., as a member of Company I. The examining surgeon asked him if he had ever had any serious illness, to which John replied that when he was a boy he used to have 'gatherings in his head.' Finding no sign of any such trouble he was asked what had been done to cure it. 'Why,' he replied, 'my mother used to treat 'em with a fine-tooth comb!' John was accepted.

KNEW THE EXACT SPOT

'Where did you get such a bad cold?' was asked of a Nantucket man who was obviously suffering in that respect. 'Well, I'll tell you where I got it,' was the reply. 'It was right between John Shaw's house and Roland Folger's shop.'

A FEW WHO'D 'COME OVER THE BAR WITHOUT CAMELS'

That not all Nantucketers are brilliant will be seen by the following collection of anecdotes.

It was a Nantucket man who, in order to estimate the requisite amount of wall paper bordering needed for a room, borrowed a step ladder from his neighbor, so as to measure for it.

A good Nantucket woman whose place was in the home said that on short days she always put the potatoes on earlier.

And it must have been the same resourceful house-

keeper who said that, when she wanted an extra good cake, she just doubled all the ingredients.

THE FINISHING TOUCH

We may perhaps admire the intensity of purpose and singleness of soul of that Nantucket woman who, having lost her case in court, visited the opposing lawyer and called him every opprobrious epithet which she could think of. But after she got home she thought of one more; so she donned her bonnet and shawl, returned to his office, and called him that.

EN PASSANT

A knowledge of the island geography is necessary to the proper appreciation of this one.

Long ago, on the occasion of one of the famous old-fashioned tea-parties, given by the keeper's wife at Great Point, a wagon-load of the guests from town stopped at Aunt Love's in Polpis to take her with them. But they found the dear old lady much perturbed by some occurrence and in no mood for festivities. She refused emphatically to attend the party, and her friends were obliged to go on without her. They had not been long in their hostess's sitting-room at Great Point, however, when Aunt Love walked in upon them, remarking coolly that she 'was just going by and thought she might as well stop.'

MILLINERY OUT OF THE QUESTION

A former Nantucket sexton was besought by his daughter for permission to purchase a new bonnet. His reply was: 'No, daughter, thee cannot have any new head-gear now, for I haven't buried a living soul for two weeks.'

CHERCHEZ LA FEMME

There is a story of one Nathaniel Worth, who, one day when his son called to see him, took the young man out to inspect a new colt, of which he was very proud. As they walked around the animal, which stood by its mother in the barn-yard, suddenly the colt let fly a tiny hoof, and as Nathaniel happened to be in the way, he received a rather severe kick. Seizing a stick the old man began to belabor the mare. 'Why, father,' remonstrated the son, 'it was the colt that kicked you — not the mare.' 'I know it,' said Nathaniel, 'but didn't you see her give him the wink?'

NO REGRETS?

One of the Husseys sends this one:

Father and Mother Hussey planned to entertain their relatives at Christmas time, but when the list was made out, the number was appalling, and they wondered if they could do it, without slighting some of them. Mother took a hopeful view of the matter, however, saying, 'Oh, well, of course they won't all come; probably not more than half. You go ahead, Father, and invite them.' So Father started out with the list. He was gone a long time. Mother met him at the door, saying, 'Well, how many accepted?' 'Not a devil of a one *refuses!*' was the emphatic reply.

ASKED FOR PRAYERS

In some of the Nantucket churches it was formerly customary when a church member sailed on a voyage to the Pacific for his wife to hand in a notice to be read from the pulpit, somewhat to this effect: 'Captain Peter Coffin having gone to sea, his wife desires

the prayers of the congregation.' It so happened on one such occasion that an off-island minister happened to be substituting for the regular pastor. We may imagine the sensation produced when it was announced with all due solemnity that 'Captain Peter Coffin, having gone to see his wife, desires the prayers of the congregation.'

THE NANTUCKET JAIL

Enough stories have been told about Nantucket's famous old jail to fill at least one chapter in this Basket, but a few will suffice to show its reputation. Perhaps the oldest one is about the prisoner who sent word to the town fathers that if they didn't do something about stopping up the holes in the walls to keep the sheep out, he wouldn't stay there.

DURANCE VILE

Some one asked the Nantucket jailer how he made sure that all his prisoners were in when he locked up at night. 'Oh,' he said easily, 'I just call in at the door, "Boys, are you there?" and they answer, "Yes, we're here."'

WHY BE A 'SPOIL SPORT'?

One jailer who had a weakness for 'gunning,' having had one of his old friends equally fond of the sport committed to his care, used to release his chum in the morning. They would then go out of town for a day in the duck stand, returning in time for the prisoner to be locked up again for the night.

PERFECTLY SAFE

A stranger once asked the jailer's wife if she never felt nervous when her husband didn't happen to be

around, and there were prisoners in the lock-up. 'Certainly not,' was the indignant reply, 'I'd have you understand they are all our own people, and perfectly respectable!'

This is an excellent illustration, too, of that characteristic complacency of most Nantucketers mentioned in the earlier chapter on Nantucket traits.

Coming down to more modern times, when the chief function of the jailer is to exhibit the classic structure to the curious tourist in search of 'local color,' we have this one.

THE MYSTERY SOLVED

One day when the jailer was showing some visitors through the institution only two out of the three cells were opened for their inspection. Noting a third iron-bound door with the usual grating in the upper panel, they asked if they couldn't see that one, too. 'No,' said the keeper, 'I can't show you that one now. P'r'aps I can next week if you come around.' This naturally aroused the visitors' curiosity, and, scenting some mystery, they asked if there was a prisoner in it. 'Well, no; not exactly,' was the rather evasive reply. Convinced now that they were really missing something, one of the party showed a disposition to press the matter and wanted to know *why* they couldn't see *all* the cells. After stalling further to little purpose, the jailer finally blurted out: 'Well, then, if you must know, I got a settin' hen in there, an' I don't want to disturb her.'

A FEW 'ADS' FROM THE LOCAL PAPERS

This advertisement appeared in the 'Inquirer' of March 11, 1823:

Wanted

Smart, native, honest Lad of from 12 to 16 years of age, who writes a good hand and is acquainted with figures, to attend in a West India Goods Store. No compensation will be allowed.

What a temptation to an ambitious boy to enter a mercantile life!

The 'Inquirer' of April 25, 1829, published the following:

Special Notice

The person who STOLE the subscriber's Wheel Barrow is requested to call and take the side boards which belong to it.

E. W. TALLANT

In the same journal for May 16, 1825, we find this:

I, Sylvanus Folger (vulgarly called *Dobbins*), do by these presents, in my wrath and indignation, solemnly declare in this public manner, to all boys who shall hereafter throw stones at me, or call me by any nickname, that I will lay the IRON ARM of the law upon them, and will bring them to condign punishment.

SYLVANUS FOLGER

On April 27, 1833, Thomas A. Gardner published the following, also in the 'Inquirer':

SOME person to me unknown had the goodness on the night of the 24th inst. to take and carry away from my store, without leave or license, a grindstone weighing 282 lbs. Should the person who took it be in want of another, I should be happy to relieve him of the burthen of carrying it away by furnishing him with a horse and cart gratis.

In much more recent times a local tailor advertises:

If the person who borrowed my snips will return them, I can lend them to some one else.

A MARK-UP SALE

Samuel B. Romaine, who had a store on Main Street, does not appear to be one who had much faith in 'mark-down' sales. His advertisement in the 'Inquirer' of July 24, 1833, reads:

20 Per Cent Above Cost

As the reduction of stock has become so universal, the subscriber offers for sale all he has on hand at the above advance, in lots to suit purchasers for cash, his object being to make money.

The following 'Card' was published in the 'Inquirer' of January 12, 1833:

The thief who stole a jug of oil from the North Humane House on Great Point, on Sunday last, is requested to return the jug to the place from which he took it; and he may keep the oil to light his crime-stained steps through Purgatory. And no questions will be asked by Caleb Cushman, Supt.

Editor Jenks, of the 'Inquirer,' before referred to, had a keen and pungent wit, and it is possible he may have had a hand in preparing the copy for some of these ads.

One of his esteemed contemporaries having spelled Inquirer with a preliminary E, Mr. Jenks wrote, 'He'll find himself ill at Es in putting out other people's Is.'

Some one having taken the editor to task for mentioning the South Tower and omitting to comment on the North one, he hastened to say that a spire has been erected on the North Tower 59 feet high from the ground, that it is a good lookout, is painted and the 'materials are almost as durable as the doctrines preached there.'

CAST OFF THE PAINTER

A certain local painter, who was rather 'poor pay,' had long owed the 'Inquirer' a bill for advertising. On being dunned rather hard by Mr. Jenks, he finally said, 'If I don't pay you that money by next Thursday, it'll be because I'm dead.' Friday's issue of the 'Inquirer' contained an obituary notice of the painter, written in Jenks's best style.

CHAPTER VIII

GENEALOGY AND NECROLOGY

FAMILY counts for much among the older Nantucketers. Relationships are traced to the *n*th degree, and some of the patriarchs and matriarchs can give the pedigree, for several generations at least, of almost any citizen who claims descent from the early settlers. There have always been certain representatives of the old stock who specialized on this sort of thing, making copious notes and filling big blank books with their records and reminiscences. The library of the Nantucket Historical Association contains a remarkable collection of genealogical books and data of old New England families, and students of the subject who consult it tell us there is much material to be found there which they have been unable to locate elsewhere in their researches. The following incident is typical of many such which are related:

A former librarian of the Atheneum went home one evening, deep in thought, and said to her sister: 'Ann W. Starbuck has been taking out books as a member of the family of George P. Starbuck, but I cannot seem to recall the connection.' Without a moment's hesitation her sister answered: 'Ann W. Starbuck's mother's father's first wife's husband was a brother of George P. Starbuck's mother.'

RETRIBUTION

A good Quaker lady who was keen on genealogy, exasperated at being unable to rouse any enthusiasm for the subject in the mind of her younger sister, ex-

claimed one day: 'Well, I wish thee might be left a legacy sometime, and be unable to get it because thee could not prove thy relationship.'

EPITAPHS

While there are many interesting bits to be found on the old gravestones in the Nantucket burying-grounds, the town is probably not as rich in such material as many other places of equal size and antiquity in New England, for the very good reason that during the period of our maximum population a very large percentage of our people were Quakers, and the members of the Society of Friends, as a rule, did not sanction any posthumous memorial of this character. Thousands upon thousands of Quakers are buried in unmarked graves on the island, and it was only in later days, after the various splits in the ranks of the Society, that a few of the more liberal members made such slight concession to the custom of 'the world's people' as to permit the erection of a very modest headstone, bearing nothing more than the name of the departed, with perhaps the dates of birth and death.

Of the earlier epitaphs which may be deciphered, nearly all reflect the somber theology of John Calvin and Jonathan Edwards, being for the most part warnings to the survivors of the deceased against the peril of hell-fire and eternal damnation. Though varying in phraseology, they are surprisingly alike in sentiment and purport. Later on there is an occasional whimsical touch, but few are to be found to compare in jocularity with many which are quoted from other sections. In making such a comparison, however, it should be borne in mind that the particu-

larly amusing ones quoted in some of the published collections are gathered from widely separated sources extending over a very wide area — no one cemetery or section, perhaps, contributing any very large number to the list. As a work of this kind, however, would hardly be complete without a few samples of what may be found here, we have culled some of the best specimens for this chapter.

There are many variations on the theme of the following, which may be characterized as

CAUTIONARY SIGNALS

Stop, kind reader, and shed a tear
O'er the dust that slumbers here;
And when you read the fate of me
Think on the glass that runs for thee.

Stop, my friend, as you pass by;
As you are now, so once was I.
As I am now, so must you be;
Prepare for death and follow me.
Follow me and be you wise,
And up to Heaven you will arise.

1838

Similar in import is this one:

He knows we are but dust
Scattered with every breath.
His anger like a rising wind
Can send us swift to death.

1818

And this:

Learn then, ye living! By these mouths be taught
Of all these sepulchres' instruction true —
That soon or late death is your lot
And the next opening grave may yawn for you.

1812

The same thought differently expressed:

Stop, gentle reader and think awhile
On them that lie beneath this soil.
Perhaps it may be your next lot
To be intom'd on the next spot.

1828

And the same year we are admonished:

Let each who has a soul to save
Extend his views beyond the grave.

1828

Also:

Death is a debt to nature due
Which I have paid and so must you.

1828

Even shorter and more to the point, yet conveying the same message:

Mouldering beneath the clod
With emphasis I speak.
Prepare to meet thy God.
His face and favor seek.

1830

Somewhat more philosophical, perhaps, are these:

This mortal life decays apace,
How soon the bubble's broke.
Adam and all his numerous race
Are vanity and smoke.

1806

When soul and body did unite
In me my parents took delight.
The scene's changed; the separation made,
And I am numbered with the dead.
Both old and young may plainly see
That youth was no defence for me.

Death's summons we must all obey
And mingle with our mother clay.

1802

Many strike a more hopeful note:

Reader, farewell until the
Red morning of the resurrection
Sparkles over yonder hills.

1837

It is religion that can give
Sweetest pleasure while we live.
It is religion must apply
Solid comfort when we die.

1829

Could she too soon escape a world of sin?
Or could eternal bliss too soon begin?

1840

Lo, the pain of life is past,
All his warfare now is o'er.
Death and hell behind are cast,
Grief and suffering are no more.

1842

Here is a quaint one of an eighteenth-century date:

By one great transgression of Adam the first
We all were made mortal and sentenced to dust;
But Adam the second, the Chief of our race,
From death will recall us by infinite grace.

1797

and one presaging a possible change for the better:

Farewell my friend whose tender care
Has long engaged my love.
Your fond embrace I have exchanged
For better things above.

1848

Peculiarly appropriate is this one in memory of a sailor killed by a whale:

Let others boast how strong they be,
Nor death nor danger fear,
But we'll confess, O Lord, to thee.
What feeble things we are.

1829

An inscription on another sailor's stone states:

He departed this life at sea, Dec. 13, 1763, in
Lat. 38, Deg. N. Long. 63 Deg. W.

1763

On a monument to a 'Brother Mason' we find:

Erected by Several Members of the Masonic Fraternity as a Tribute of Respect to the Memory of a Worthy Brother.
His labors cease; they meet that smiling eye
Whose beams of love illume the Lodge on high.

1821

These tributes to departed wives are among the most touching.

To name her virtues ill befits my grief:
What was my bliss can now give no relief;
A husband mourns. The rest let friendship tell.
Fame spread her worth. Her husband knew it well.

1796

If spotless honor and unstinted worth,
If smiling innocence and blooming youth,
If female sweetness joined with manly sense,
And winning wit that never gave offence,
If modesty that never wore a frown,
And goodness that may claim a Heavenly crown
If virtues such as these deserve a tear,
Here pour thy grief, for they are buried here.

1810

The propriety of her conduct in all the endearing relations of life, while it reproved that of many, was worthy of the imitation of all.

1812

Probably the best known and most often quoted inscription from a Nantucket cemetery is that from the grave of Huldah, wife of Benjamin Snow, dated Jan. 29, 1855, said to be the result of a difference of opinion between those most interested as to whether she should be laid in the North or the South burying-ground. Those favoring the North finally prevailed, but their opponents consoled themselves by erecting a stone in the South with an inscription reading:

> However dear, she's not laid here.
> Some private grief was her disease.
> Laid to the North her friends to please.

On a stone in one of the cemeteries this simple tribute speaks volumes:

> She was so pleasant.

PLAYING THE HOSE

An old Nantucket scrap-book credits the following epitaph to 'a Hosier stone':

> He left his hose his Hannah and his love
> To go and sing Hosannah in the realms above.

AT ANCHOR

The following epitaph was alleged by the Boston Sentinel to have been inscribed on a tombstone in Nantucket. It was not to be found in any burial ground on the island in 1835, and beyond question deserves a niche in the same Temple of Fame where the story of 'Nantucket's First Tea' is so carefully and elaborately embalmed:

Free from the storms and gusts of human life,
Free from the squalls of passion and of strife,
Here lies Reuben Chase anchored, who stood the sea
Of ebbing life and flowing misery;
He luffed and bore away to please mankind,
Yet duty urged him still to head the wind;
Rheumatic gusts at length his mast destroyed,
But jury health awhile he still enjoyed.
'Tho not dandy rigged, his prudent eye foresaw.
He took a reef at fortune's quickest flaw.
Worn out with age and shattered head,
At last he struck and grounded on his bed.
There in distress careening thus he lay,
His final bilge expecting every day;
Heaven took his ballast from his dreary hold,
And left his body destitute of soul.

Those interested in epitaphs and gravestone inscriptions are referred to the fairly complete collection indexed alphabetically by names in the library of the Nantucket Historical Association.

CHAPTER IX

TWENTIETH CENTURY ANECDOTES

Not all the good stories date back to 'the good old times.' Many amusing incidents and sayings which have a distinct local flavor are still to be found and some of them have found their way into the Scrap Basket from time to time, enough, we think, to warrant us in devoting a separate chapter to these more recent contributions to our budget of humor.

Some characteristic anecdotes are related by our summer visitors of their experiences with the carriage drivers and chauffeurs who, for a modest stipend, will drive the unsuspecting stranger through the town or over the island roads, describing 'all the points of interest' after a fashion of their own. A few of these *bons mots* have been preserved:

WE CAN'T FATHOM THIS ONE

A party driving through the Sauls Hills country asked the local Jehu where all the big boulders which dot the landscape in that part of the island came from. 'Oh, them?' was the reply. 'Them was left by the glaziers. At least, that's what the glaziers claim.'

PITIED THEIR IGNORANCE

Another, quite as evidently very much to the manner born, and proud of the fact, confided to a friend, after conducting a party about the town, that he had been asked what those platforms were on the top of many of the houses. 'I told 'em they were "walks,"' he added, 'but I don't know where they'd been all their days.'

SYMPATHETIC, BUT PRACTICAL

One of the old 'Cap'ns' who drove a carriage during the summer months for many years, noting that one of his passengers, a lady, who occupied the front seat with him, was dressed in deep mourning, inquired sympathetically: 'Met with a loss, madam?' The lady, though somewhat taken aback by the question, replied quietly, 'Yes.' After a pause he asked, still sympathetically, 'husband?' Again, from the lady, 'Yes.' Another pause, then, most sympathetically, 'hope he left you comf'table.'

HAD BEEN 'OFF'

A Nantucket school teacher in the primary grade asked her pupils one day how many of them had ever been off-island. One little girl, whose history the teacher happened to be very well-informed about, was among those who raised their hands. 'Why, Polly,' she said, 'I didn't know you had ever been off-island. When did you go?' 'One day last summer,' replied the little six-year-old, 'papa took me down to Brant Point, and I took off my shoes and stockings and waded right off.'

JORDAN'S A HARD ROAD TO TRAVEL

A Nantucket boy, having obtained his high-school diploma, went to Boston to seek his fortune. After a time he 'secured a situation,' as the home paper puts it, in one of the big department stores. Being young, however, and his duties arduous, the pull of the old home was pretty strong, and nostalgia having won the day, he threw up his job as summer approached and went back home to his good mother, who, after greeting him affectionately and providing him with a good hot supper, asked anxiously: 'Well, and what did Mr. Jordan say when you left?'

A KIND EMPLOYER

Another boy, after a year in a New York office, was granted the customary fortnight's vacation, which, as might be expected, he elected to spend on the island. Having a grand good time, without consulting his employer, he overstayed his leave several days. About the time he thought of starting back he received a letter from the office advising him that his vacation was indefinitely extended. This so pleased his innocent old mother that she took the letter round to all the neighbors, 'just to show what a nice man Georgie worked for.'

Some one once went to sell Mr. Webb some codfish spawns, known locally as 'breeches and chittlings,' or more often as 'inwards.' He went to the door and the peddler asked: 'Want to buy any in'ards?' Webb looked into the pail, and said: 'F-f-f-or God's s-sake, whose?'

SOME SCHOOL STORIES

'English as she is taught' produces much the same results in the Nantucket schools as elsewhere, apparently. On one occasion the late Dr. Sharp, who was an authority on marine biology, spoke on that subject to the pupils of the high school. Part of the information imparted had to do with the spawning habits of certain molluscs. The principal having asked the pupils to write out what they could remember of the lecture, one boy carefully noted and reported the interesting fact that 'oysters always spoon in August.'

Another incident is related of a girl pupil who glibly recited her well-learned history lesson to the

effect that during a certain battle the attacking army ascended the hill 'pantaloon after pantaloon.'

Another boy gave the definition of bullion as 'a little bull.'

THE RETORT COURTEOUS

As evidence of the fact that despite the foregoing stories, our educational system does 'take' sometimes, it is a pleasure to relate the following, which would seem almost too good to be true where it not vouched for on the best of authority.

A Nantucket boy went up on the Ocean House veranda, and accosted a complacent-looking fat gentleman who sat with his feet on the rail:

'Want to buy any pond-lilies?' said the boy.

'No, I guess not,' said the man. 'Making any money, bub?'

'A little,' was the reply.

'What do you sell when there ain't no pond-lilies?' was the next question.

'Oh, sometimes one thing and sometimes another,' replied the boy.

'Humph! Don't you go to school?'

'Oh, yes; when there is any. School is closed now.'

'Do you go to school on Nantucket?'

'Yes, sir.'

'Oh, they have a school here, then, do they?'

'Oh, yes, sir.'

'Well, what do they learn you in school?'

'Why, they teach us grammar and other things.'

THE SKIPPERS

That the local boatmen, no less than the carriage drivers, are responsible for their share of the humors

of life, is shown by one or two 'scraps' which have reached us. They have a humor of their own, and get almost as much fun out of the 'sea-sick parties,' as some one has called them, which they take out as their passengers do. Possibly more at times. They like nothing better than to get one of those amateur sailors of the common or piazza variety out 'back of the rips,' and soak a little of the brine out of him.

HE KNEW HIS PLACE

'What would you do,' asked the skipper of a cat-boat on one such occasion, addressing a jolly fresh-water tar in a smart yachting cap, 'if you were aboard ship and the old man should sing out: "Hey, you Jack, lay aloft there and clew up that fore-to-gallant star-board studd'n's'l boom iron?" ' After a moment's deep thought, Percy, with a keener perception of the situation and his relation to it than he had perhaps been given credit for, replied with conviction: 'I should go right straight home!'

COURTESY HAS ITS LIMITS

Nantucket skippers are always prudent, and usually courteous to the last degree, but we can hardly condone, though we may well understand, this example of pardonable exasperation or the part of one of them at the helm of a boat bound for Wauwinet, with a stiff breeze from the east'ard, and a boat-load of passengers, wearied and grown careless by a constant repetition of apparently senseless tack-tics: 'Ready about, now! Ready about! Hard-a-lee! Low bridge, there! Low bridge!! Low Bridge!!! — Well, I shan't say it again, and (sotto voce) I don't care a d—n if some of ye do get a crack on the head!'

A PATENT BOAT

'But you can't get home if the wind is dead against you, can you?' inquired an anxious passenger, as they started back from Great Point in a 'smoky sou'wester.' 'Oh, yes,' replied the skipper, reassuringly. 'You see I had this boat made with two sides on purpose, so that when she couldn't sail on one tack, she could on the other. It's the only boat in these waters that's built just that way.' And the passenger, her confidence in the adaptability of the craft and the sagacity of its skipper restored, curled up in her oilskins and took a nap.

THE WRONG ANCHOR

A certain husky skipper of one of Nantucket's big modern power boats was subject to nightmares, especially after indulging, as was his wont, in his favorite light refreshment of mince pie shortly before turning in. One night he dreamed he was off the back side of Muskeget in a stiff Norther. His engine had stalled, it refused to start, and he was rapidly drifting onto a lee shore. His only hope was to get the anchor out, so he seized the big mud-hook and, with a mighty heave, cast it far to windward. A yell from his diminutive but spunky better half, who found herself lying in a crumpled heap against the baseboard across the room, woke the skipper suddenly to a realization of the fact that, though safe in his own bed he was not yet altogether 'clear of the breakers.' His nightly repasts thereafter were, by orders from higher up, confined to less hearty comestibles.

INFORMATION WANTED

Some of the questions asked by visitors to the exhibits of the Nantucket Historical Association are

well worth preserving, but most of them cannot be printed for fear of hurting some one's feelings. Just one sample of many may be given. One lady evinced much interest in whaling, asking many questions, among others: 'Tell me, are whales born or hatched?'

HE NEEDED 'A VOYAGE TO LEARN'

'I didn't ask for a round-trip ticket,' exclaimed an irate passenger on the Gay Head, en route to Nantucket, as the purser detached the Woods-Hole-to-Nantucket coupon and handed back the return portion of the ticket. 'I don't want that for anything, you can keep it,' he persisted, as the purser pressed the slip on him. 'Why, you'll need it to come back on, won't you?' said the official. 'Not at all, sir,' was the haughty reply, 'Not at all! I intend to return some other way.'

'NOT UNLESS SHE'S GOT FINS'

This reminds us of the response reported some years ago by the superintendent of the Nantucket Railroad when he received a telegram from the lost car tracer of some Western railroad asking him if freight car No. so and so had by any chance strayed onto the Nantucket road, and got side-tracked.

OH, FOR THE WINGS OF A DOVE

A superannuated mariner served for many years as custodian of the old Atheneum museum. On one occasion a party of excursionists arrived late in the afternoon and wanted to see the collection. As was his custom, the old man took them about the room, explaining the various curiosities and relics. Having concluded the rounds and the visitors showing no signs of going, though it was then past closing time

and his five o'clock 'tea' was waiting, he started in again, thinking that a repetition of even a part of his lecture would prove a sufficient hint and have the desired effect. But not so. The visitors drank in his words with the same avidity as before, and apparently expected him to go through it all again. Finally, seizing a big club from one of the shelves, he swung it loosely in his hand as he pattered on: 'This, ladies and gentlemen, is a genuyne war club used by the savages of the Fiji Islands — I wish to God I was there!'

'A WINDOW IN THRUMS'

A dear old lady whose chief occupation and pleasure were 'watching the pass go by,' was heard to remark: 'By the looks of that package I think Zimri Coffin has bought a piece of cheese.'

That the old-time speech of the island people has by no means passed out of use is proved by a comparatively recent experience of a family who were looking for an apartment for the summer. Having hesitated about taking the upper floor of one of the old houses, on the ground that it was not quite large enough for their needs, the lady of the house offered to 'heave in a room up garret,' which served to clinch the bargain.

CHAPTER X

EXPRESSIONS AND IDIOMS

The Compilers have here undertaken to set down alphabetically some of the more common words, nautical expressions, and idiomatic sayings which are characteristic of the Nantucket speech. Many of them are heard elsewhere along the coast, and some are of universal use even far from the sea, but not a few of them are quite peculiar to this section. The interesting point is that many terms originally used by the sailors have been borrowed by landsmen to express a similar or related thing or act. Naturally more such terms are used, they are used more often, and they are applied with more understanding of their original meaning among a seafaring people. Many of the words are survivals of old English speech which have passed out of use elsewhere. Every term given will no doubt suggest many others, and a book could easily be compiled on this one subject; but we have simply jotted down those expressions which have occurred to us, in the belief that even a limited glossary of such terms would be of interest, leaving to others the interesting task of extending the list until it may some time, perhaps, be fairly complete. Some of the words quoted are very difficult to define. Though we have heard them all our lives, and know exactly what they mean when we hear them, there seem to be no synonyms for many of them, and the exact shade of meaning is sometimes difficult to indicate.

Abreast. Opposite to, or in line with; a nautical term originally.

Admire. To want very much, as 'I should admire to go.'

Adrift. Nantucketers use this word constantly in the sense of loose or unfastened: as 'a blind on the house got adrift in the gale'; also to express general disorder as 'everything was all adrift.'

Afoul. In contact with; up against; entangled with.

All in the course of the voyage. An expression much used, meaning one must take anything that comes, as we say 'it's all in the day's work.'

All Sail Set. Hurriedly; sometimes, fully dressed. 'He was going "all sail set" for home.' 'She had "all sail set" for the party.'

Aloft. High up, or above, as 'I'm going aloft (upstairs) to bed'; or 'I put the thing up aloft.'

Alongside. Meaning obvious. In very common use.

Amidships. The middle.

An Affair of Oil. Cutting in and trying out a whale. Hence any greasy job.

An Anchor to Windward. Prudent — prepared to meet an emergency.

Anchor It. To put a weight on anything; or secure it so it won't get 'adrift.'

Any Port in a Storm. Meaning obvious.

Astern. In the rear of, or behind.

Astern the Lighter. Tardy, lagging behind; a lighter being a slow-moving craft used for transferring cargo, to be 'astern the lighter' is to be rather a laggard, and the term is used in a contemptuous sense, as 'Oh, he's always astern the lighter!'

Athwart, athwartships (or 'thwartships). Crosswise, as ''thwartships of the bench.' Speaking of an operation, a Nantucketer said: 'they cut me 'thwartships.'

At Loggerheads. At variance; opposed.

At Sea. Uncertain, undetermined; as 'I was all at sea as to what to do next.' Also, wrong or in error; as 'he was all at sea about the matter.'

Back and Fill. To vacillate, to be unsteady or infirm of purpose.

Back of the Rip. The dangerous shoals and sandbars which surround the island are known as 'rips'; the islanders have a way of consigning any annoying person or thing to a point beyond these obstructions to navigation, from which it would be difficult if not impossible to return. Example: 'I wish he (or it) was back of the rip!'

Bare Poles. This term is used to indicate scanty raiment; as, 'she was scudding under bare poles.'

Beat. To tack, to make headway against the wind by changing the course frequently. We do not say 'tack to windward,' but 'beat to windward,' though otherwise the two words are practically synonymous.

Beats the Pattern. Clever, remarkable.

Becket. A loop or ring of rope, or a pocket or sheath to hold anything in position.

Belay. To hold, to stop, to make fast.

Below. Obviously the opposite of aloft, used in the same way, as applying to down stairs or down cellar.

Bend On. To attach, as a sail to the yard, etc. Uncle Joe spoke of bending on a new necktie.

Berth. Situation; as, 'he has secured a berth with Jones & Co.' Sometimes used as a verb, as 'he berthed at Cousin Sarah's.'

Better Weather. Easier times, improved conditions, as 'let's hope he'll make better weather of it now'; also used as a verb, meaning clears or improves; 'there she better-weathers' means that it is clearing up after a storm.

Bible Leaves. Slices of blubber from the mincing knife ready to be tried out.

Bootleg. Whaler's coffee, an old term, probably antedating its present meaning.

Born in the Middle of the Week and Looking Both Ways for Sunday. A queer old local expression applied to a very cross-eyed person.

Bow On. Head on, face to face, as 'I saw him coming bow on.'

Bows Under. Laboring heavily, as a ship in a head sea.
Breaking Out. Taking out of the hold — as a cask of beef.
Breezening On. Said of an increasing wind.

Cadoo. Talk, fuss. 'Such a cadoo as they made over it.' Similar to to-do.
Came out of the Bureau Drawer (sometimes the *top drawer*). Meaning fresh, dainty, clean.
Carry On. To be gay or reckless. An imprudent skipper was said to carry on (sail). This term, though originally used in the nautical sense, implying recklessness, has come to be used to express any lively good time, in the sense that the verb to train is sometimes used.
Cannikin Tub. A wooden pail, with straight sides or slightly tapering toward the top, hooped, and with a close-fitting wooden cover. The term is an old one, but though in constant use to-day by Nantucketers, most off-islanders are puzzled by it.
Chock. Literally a block or wedge to limit the height or distance to which anything could be hoisted or moved. The groove cut in the gunwale of a boat for oars to work in, or in the stern for a scull was called a *chock*. Hence *chock-full, chock-a-block* and *chock-a-block full* are all nauticalisms in general use, but more commonly used among a seafaring people than elsewhere, and Nantucketers employ these various terms on all occasions.
Clip In. To run in for a short visit, as 'I think I'll clip in to Mary's on the way home.' It implies a hurried call, and if the visitor announces that he just clipped in, he is not expected to tarry more than a few minutes.
Clipper Built. A well-set-up man or woman is referred to as clipper built — that is, trim, trig, and up-to-date.
Close Aboard, Close Quarters. Very near.
Close Reef, A. An old sailor's term for a drink of rum, whiskey, or any hard liquor.
Close to the Wind. Hard pressed or hard up, physically, financially, or otherwise.
Cock-billed. Awry; out of plumb.
Come About. To turn round, to change the course, as a ship

when tacking against the wind. Much used in a figurative sense by the islanders.

Come Aboard. A welcome to the coming guest, or an invitation to a passer-by or a casual visitor to accept one's hospitality.

Commons. Unlike most old New England towns, Nantucket never had a Common, but it did have thousands of acres of 'commons,' that is, undivided lands held in common by the early proprietors and their successors. Until recent times all the unfenced lands on the island were called 'the commons' and it is only since the advent of the summer folks in the last generation that we have come to call them 'the moors,' which, by the way, is said to be a misnomer, as they are not moors at all in the true meaning of that word, but rather heath lands or heath.

Continent, the. The islander's name for the mainland of North America.

Coof. An 'off-islander,' said to have been applied originally only to Cape Codders.

Cornstarch Airs. Stiff, formal manners.

Course and Distance. Mean much to the islander, and are constantly employed in conversation. To say that a boat or a vessel was a mile to the south'ard headed nor'west tells the story in a word. So, when speaking of meeting an acquaintance, he says 'he was headed to the east'ard when I saw him.' A boy applying for the loan of a saw was told by the owner, an old mariner, 'head right through that door, port your helm, haul to the south'ard about ten foot, and you'll find it hung on a nail about hand-spike high.' The lad, being island-bred, found the saw. The stranger is directed to a certain house as on the north, east, south or west side of the street, and is expected to find it without a compass. At one of the old-time 'huddles' (as dancing parties were then called), the prompter leaned over the rail of the suspended band-stand and shouted in perfect time to the music: 'Chassez a little to the north'ard, and shet that door!' The door was promptly closed by one of the dancers, and the wintry draught shut out.

Craft. This word is often given a personal application. Respect or contempt are expressed by such terms as 'She's quite a craft,' or 'He's a poor craft.' Eccentricity is implied in the term 'a queer craft.'

Cruise. A word in very common use, both as a verb and as a noun, being in either case pronounced with the sharp s sound, as if it were spelled 'crooce.' Any outing or vacation trip is called a cruise, and we speak of cruising about town, out west'ard way, or 'just downalong.'

Cut of his Jib. General appearance, physique, clothes, and general get-up. By this do we judge of a person, and 'size him up.'

Dandy Funk. A sailor's pudding — see sub-title 'Tid-bits,' following this list.

Diddledees. Pine-needles.

Doctor, The. The name by which the cook is always known at sea.

Donkey's Breakfast. The name for a sailor's mattress, usually filled with straw or corn husks.

Douse the Glim. To put out the light; not local, but one of the slang nautical terms which still lingers.

Downalong. Many Nantucketers, when asked as to where they are bound, reply, 'Oh, jest downalong.' No one has ever been able to locate just where this popular destination is located. The North Shorer, the Upper Main Streeter, or the Chicken Hiller means when he uses it, that he is going down town. The Newtowner gives it the same meaning, but he also uses it to express a port in the opposite direction, as when he heads for home. The Under-the-Banker also uses it to indicate both up town and down town. We have always heard of people who were going there, but we never knew any one to arrive. 'Upalong' is sometimes heard, but much less frequently.

Down by the Head. A vessel loaded heavily forward, so as to put her bow too deep in the water, is said to be 'down by the head' and the expression is sometimes applied to a person bowed by age or infirmity.

Draws Lots of Water. Influential, substantial, of some importance.

Drifting. Losing ground. Going aimlessly from place to place, with no definite destination.

Ease Off. To give way slowly, as in argument.

Even Keel. Upright. This expression is very frequently used by the native islanders, and in such manner as the following: Passing a well-filled bowl of liquid to another, the housewife may be heard to say, 'Now keep it on an even keel, so's not to spill.' Or referring to some unstable thing: 'I had hard work to keep the thing on an even keel.'

Everything Drawing. Making the best possible progress in any enterprise. It conveys the idea that, whatever a person may be doing, he has called to his assistance every available factor to facilitate his work, as the mariner trims every sail so that it may best catch the breeze and 'draw.'

Fair Wind. In wishing well a parting guest, one says, 'A fair wind to you.' It is used also in speaking of a streak of luck, as 'he struck a fair wind.'

Fall Off. To drift to leeward, as a boat sailing on the wind. Hence to go sideways.

Fall To. To begin work; often, to begin eating a meal.

False Colors. Deception — as 'he's sailing under false colors.'

Fare. The total catch, as 'a big fare of fish.'

Fast. Attached. The whaleman and fisherman get fast to whale or fish, while if one's clothing is caught in some projection, it is referred to as 'got fast to an old spike' (or whatever the offending projection may have been). The term 'make fast' is to suggest attaching boat, horse, anything to some stable object.

Fathom. To understand, grasp the meaning, or to penetrate the sense of.

Figure Nine with the Tail Cut Off. That is, nothing; of no account or consequence.

Fin Out. 'All in,' as we say nowadays. A dying whale rolled over and showed his fin. So the whalemen used to say, when a man was very sick or badly hurt, 'he was pretty nigh fin out.'

First. Eager, anxious; as 'he was quite first to go the voyage.' This is a curious and, apparently, quite local use of this word.

First-rate. A common expression ashore, but of nautical origin — used in the classification of wooden ships of war.

Flax. To hurry or hustle, as 'flax around and get something on the table for dinner.'

Fleet. To move, especially to move over, to change the position of.

Foopaw. A bungling job; to make a foopaw of a thing is to make a mess of it. Said to be a corruption of the French *faux pas*, picked up from the French whalers in the Pacific.

Fudge. To bother, to fool, or 'bamboozle.'

Fu-fu. Mush and molasses.

Galley. The sailor's name for the cook-house aboard ship; often applied to the kitchen of a house.

Galley West. An odd sailor's expression, often heard, but the origin of which is obscure. To strike or hit a thing so as to demolish it or knock it over is to 'knock it galley west.' The galley doubtless refers to the cook-house. But why west rather than east, or any other point of the compass?

Gally. To frighten, to terrify; more often used in the perfect participle from 'gallied,' meaning nervous, uncertain as to what to do next, 'rattled' — applied to a whale when alarmed.

Gam. A social visit and talk. Originally this term was applied to a school of whales, and its use by the whalemen is doubtless derived from that source. Whaleships meeting at sea often hove to, and the captains would visit back and forth during the time the ships were in company. Under certain conditions the crews were allowed the privilege also. The word was used both as a noun

and as a verb, and it is still very frequently heard among Nantucketers. One says, 'I met so-and-so to-day, and we had a grand gam together,' or 'we gammed for an hour or more.'

Get the Drift. To catch the meaning of; also to get in touch with latest news and gossip, as 'I'm going down town to get the drift.'

Gingerbread Cut the Right Way. Is an old-time expression denoting that some matter has been satisfactorily settled for the person under consideration.

Glip. The 'slick' in the wake of a whale. Whalemen believed that if a boat crossed the glip, the whale would know it and take alarm.

Glite. Glitter. 'Such vanities would glite before my eyes.'

Go Ashore to Windward. Said of a person who would go wrong with no excuse.

Going by the Board. Neglected, decaying, dilapidated; a building, a boat, a road, or a business which is not looked after and taken care of is said to be 'fast going by the board.'

Gone to Bottom. When a Nantucketer drops a thing, he is apt to speak of it as having gone to bottom.

Granny Tottleheels. A wearer of high-heeled shoes.

Greasy Luck. To wish a whaleman greasy luck meant to wish him a good voyage, with plenty of oil; hence the Nantucketer uses it in well-wishes to his friends in any proposed venture. To say on parting, 'Well, greasy luck to you!' is to say 'bon voyage!'

Greenhorn. An inexperienced person, a 'tenderfoot.' Originally a sailor's expression.

Grouty. Grouchy or crusty.

Gunwale Deep (pronounced 'gunnel deep'). Heavily loaded, that is, loaded to the gunwale, the upper edge of the side of a boat, or the top of the rail.

Hail. To call or speak to, as 'I was going by and he hailed me.' In very common use on the island in this sense. Also used as a synonym for 'come' in such expressions as 'Where do you hail from?'

Half Seas Over. Half drunk.

Hannah Cook. He or it isn't 'worth a Hannah Cook.' Said to be a corruption of hand or cook, which clarifies the meaning.

Hatch. Applied to any trap door, or a door at the head of a flight of stairs.

Hatches Battened Down. All secure and tightly closed to keep the wind and rain out.

Haze. To punish. An old lady spoke of hazing her kitten for scratching up her seed bed. This use probably antedates its application to the treatment of freshmen.

Head Boat. A whaling expression. First, in the lead; used in a complimentary sense, as 'he was usually head boat'; or perhaps sarcastically, as 'oh, she always wants to be head boat.'

Head Wind. Reverses or difficulties to be overcome, as 'he's having a head wind getting his hay in.'

Heave. This verb is used in its various forms, in the sense of throw or cast.

'*Heave ho!*' a command to put all one's strength into it.

Heave in Sight. To come into view.

Heave it Overboard. Get rid of it.

Heave To. To come to a stop; in the perfect participle form, 'hove to,' it means stationary, at a standstill.

Heave Your Anchor Short. Get ready to go; as the hour grows late, and it's time to go home, father says, 'Come, mother, heave your anchor short.' This does not mean to start at once, but to get wraps, etc., and prepare for departure.

Hen Frigate. The sailor's name for a ship when the captain's wife was aboard.

Hick, Dick, and One Old Nick. A local variation of Hick, Dick, and the Devil.

High and Dry. Stranded; hard up; out of commission

Hitch. This word has many uses, both as noun and verb, and is indispensable to the islander's vocabulary. In addition to its more common uses, he speaks, perhaps, of the next hitch, meaning the next attempt, or of a hitch (a delay or obstruction) in the proceedings. To 'hitch

along' is to move over. It is also used to imply making fast. 'Up to the hitches' — as far as it will go; driven home, as a harpoon into a whale.

Hoist. Most old Nantucketers prefer this word to either lift or raise. They 'h'ist' the basket onto the table, the box into the cart, and even the food to the mouth. The word has another odd use, in a sort of a perverted sense, meaning a fall, as 'the staging gave way, and he got a bad h'ist.' There seems to be no explanation of this use of the term.

Home Port. The place where one lives; much used among the island folk.

Hooked In. Walking arm in arm. In the old days an unmarried couple seen on the street 'hooked in' were supposed to be engaged, and the gossips would say 'oh, they must be engaged, for I saw them on Main street hooked in.'

Hot Water and Ashes to Leeward. To understand that leeward (pronounced 'looard') is the direction in which the wind is blowing, is sufficient explanation of this old phrase borrowed from the sailors.

Hove Down. As a ship for repairs — on her beam ends.

Hull Down. Just showing above the horizon, as the masts and sails of a ship; hence to see only the head and shoulders or the upper part of a person's body above a fence, a hedge or a snow bank, is to see him 'hull down.'

Hyorky. Some far-off outlandish place. 'He's gone to Hyorky.'

In Charge of the Ship. Applied to any one upon whom responsibility rests during the absence of the owner or boss. It is often used in defining the duties of a caretaker.

In the Doldrums. Making no progress; hence dull, listless, perhaps sulky and dissatisfied. The Doldrums is the sailor's name for that part of the Atlantic Ocean near the equator, where, at certain seasons, the winds are light, variable and baffling, with calms and squalls interspersed, and little progress can be made by a sailing ship.

In the Suds. In the thick of things, especially in a social way, as 'oh, she's right in the suds.'

Irons. Whalers' name for harpoons.

It Takes a Voyage to Learn. Equivalent to 'experience is the best teacher.' This is often quoted as an excuse for mistakes or inefficiency due to inexperience.

Jackson. To get anything crooked or twisted — 'He jacksoned it.'

Jadehopper. A curious old word applied to a lewd or vicious woman, or sometimes to one who is only mischievous and lively.

Judy Lamp. An old-time lantern or lamp, which was hung on the 'lamp-block' — a heavy block of wood in which was stuck an upright stake, with pegs on which to hang the Judy lamp at the desired height.

Keel Out. Literally, of course, upside down, but used to express illness, as 'I've been keel out for a week with the grip.'

Keep the Run. To keep on the run, or on the go.

Kettle Halyards, or sometimes *Kitchen Halyards.* Refers to domestic duties, especially of a culinary nature or work in the kitchen. In the absence of the mother, a child was often left to 'tend the kettle halyards.'

Know the Ropes. To be familiar with anything or well posted. See reference in Chapter II — 'Sea Yarns and Sayings.'

Laboring Oar. The heavy part of the work; a person who does more than a fair share, as compared with his fellows, is said to 'pull the laboring oar.'

Land. As a verb, to disembark, or to bring to the shore, as 'he landed a hundred fish to-day.'

Last Out the Voyage. Sufficient for the time set, or for life.

Late On the Tide. Delayed, belated.

Lay. A share, a percentage. All whaling voyages were conducted on the profit-sharing basis, each man interested, from the owners and captain down to the green-

horn and boy, getting a proportionate part of the proceeds. The word has lingered in common use in the island speech.

Lay of the Land. The existing conditions and circumstances. To get the lay of the land is to get posted and acquaint one's self with all the conditions.

Lee Day. An open or free day, with no special job on hand.

Lee Set. A low bank of clouds to leeward — sometimes presaging a storm.

Loaded to the Bow Thwart. The bow thwart (the cross-seat of a boat) being higher above the water line than the others, a boat loaded to that point was filled to its reasonable capacity, though not, perhaps, quite 'gunwale deep.' As used by the islanders it means heavily loaded.

Lobscouse. A sailor's dish — see sub-title 'Tid-bits,' following this list.

Lobtail. Said of a whale when it stands on its head and waves its tail in the air — a common occurrence.

Long-sparred. A person with long limbs.

Loom, Loom Up. As a ship or a land-mark through the fog. Also, on a very clear day, when distant objects stand out clearly, we say they 'loom.'

Lower. As the old-time Nantucketer 'h'ists' most everything, rather than raising or lifting it, so he lowers, rather than handing down or dropping a thing.

Manavelins. Fancy victuals; hence anything fancy or fussy.

Marriageable. The use of this word in a certain sense by Nantucketers seems to be unique. A woman speaks of some article of wearing apparel, furniture, or household decoration as her 'marriageable,' meaning that the dress was a part of her trousseau, or that the table or picture was a wedding present. Examples: 'Jane has kept her marriageable dress all these years, and her daughter will be married in it'; or 'that bureau was a marriageable present from my aunt.'

Masthead. Any point high up, out of reach. If a spring roller shade winds itself to the top of the window, the

house-wife says, 'Well, that's gone to masthead.' Anything very high up is said to be 'masthead high.'

Meeching. Mean, sneaking.

Melzer. A sailor's dish. See sub-title 'Tid-bits,' following this list.

Mess. Enough for a meal — As a mess of clams, or a mess of birds. When such commodities are scarce they say, 'it's hard to get enough for a mess.' The word is also used to describe certain dishes for the table, as 'I'll fix up a mess for dinner,' that is, make a chowder or a stew.

Miss His Reckoning. To lose one's way, to miscalculate, to make a mistake.

Misstay. To make a mistake and get hung up.

Mollygrumps. Low spirits, equivalent to 'down in the dumps.' Not strictly local but in common use in Nantucket.

Muckle. To work hard under adverse conditions, as 'he muckled away at it till he finally got it right'; also to bother or disturb, as 'don't muckle me now.'

Mux. To botch a job, or make a mess of it.

Nantucket Sleigh Ride. Being towed by a whale in a boat after getting one or more 'irons' in. A very old expression.

Navigate. This word is employed to express progress by any means of locomotion, walking, riding, driving, etc. Bad walking is called 'bad navigating,' and vice versa.

Needs to Eat a Piece of Mad Dog. Is an ancient and expressive term applied to a slow-going, stupid person.

Odd as Huckleberry Chowder. Is an expressive localism used as a simile for extreme eccentricity.

Off. An abbreviation of 'off-island,' is very frequently heard. One often hears such a remark as 'I haven't seen you lately. Have you been Off?' Still more odd is the expression 'when did you come On from Off?'

Off and On. This very common expression wherever the language is spoken is undoubtedly of nautical origin, meaning to steer a course first away from and then to-

ward the land. It may frequently be heard here in its original sense, as 'cruising off and on.'

Off-Island and Off-Islander. Words in constant local use, and of too obvious a meaning to require definition.

Off-Soundings. In deep water. One who gets beyond his capacity in an argument is said to be off-soundings, that is, he can't 'touch bottom.'

Old Coot. A rather disrespectful name for an old person, as 'there were a lot of old coots there.'

Old Man. The sailor's invariable name for the captain, though he may be the youngest man on the ship.

Old Town Turkey. The Nantucketer's name for any resident of Martha's Vineyard; from the town of Edgartown, which was formerly known as Old Town.

On Deck. Alert, prepared, ready for anything.

On the Rocks. Badly off; wrecked; ruined, as financially. One of the nautical terms adopted by the landsmen.

On the Stocks. In process of completion, as 'I've got a job of work on the stocks.' 'On the hooks' has much the same meaning.

On the Ways. Is used more to imply illness or disability from any cause, that is, 'on the ways for repairs.'

Over the Bay. Another name for intoxicated.

Over the Bulge (or Bilge). The crisis passed; used especially to denote the successful accomplishment of the hardest part of a job or duty.

Part. To break, as a rope or chain.

Pass, The. People on the street. All Nantucketers enjoy 'watching the pass.'

Pernickety. A survival of old English speech, meaning fussy, particular, especially about trifles.

Petered or *Petered Out.* Used up; exhausted.

Piggin. Another good old word, still used to some extent. It means a small wooden tub, with hoops, and one stave projecting above the rim to form a handle; used as a receptacle for flour, meal, or other material. It differs from a cannikin tub, in having the long stave and no cover.

Plain Sailing. A nautical expression in general use everywhere, meaning good, easygoing.

Pod. The whalemen's name for a school of whales. Very old and little used in later years.

Polpisy. Countrified, outlandish; a very old local term, dating back to a time when the people of that Nantucket suburb were, perhaps, less in touch with the civilizing influences of the island's metropolis than at present. 'Don't act Polpisy!' was said to a child who was awkward and ungainly.

Port. The left-hand side; very much used by Nantucket men and boys. Also, as a noun, to indicate a place or locality, as the last, next, or home port.

Preventer. Spare or extra — Preventer boatsteerer.

Put Out. To start; same as 'set sail' or 'get under way.'

Quint. An abbreviation of quintessence; applied to a 'pernickety' old maid; from a local saying describing such a person, 'she's the quintessence of old maid stewed down to a half pint.' The corresponding adjective is 'quinty.'

Raise. To sight or discover, as to raise whales or to raise land.

Rantum Scoot. A term, we believe, peculiar to Nantucket, and very old. It means a day's 'cruise' or picnic about the island, usually a drive, but it might be on foot. The distinctive feature of such an excursion is that the party has no definite destination, but rather a roving commission, in which respect such a trip differs from a 'squantum' (which see later). 'Rantum' is probably a corruption of random.

Rig, Rig Out, Rig Up, etc. These terms are constantly used by the islanders, in common with most seafaring folk, as substitutes for other words expressing the same meaning in use elsewhere, such as fix, arrange, prepare, make ready, etc.

Running Before the Wind. To be favored by luck, as of a successful man it may be said 'he's running before the wind now all right.'

Salt Horse. Salt beef, always so called by sailors.

Sat in the Butter Tub. Said of one who has fallen into good luck, especially of a girl who has married well; an expressive phrase, to say the least.

Scrabble. Formerly used to express hustle and haste.

Scrap Islander. The name applied to a Nantucketer by the people of Martha's Vineyard.

Scrimshont. A corruption of scrimshaw, the name given to carving on whales' teeth or bone or other fancy work executed by the sailors.

Scud. To hurry, to move quickly. A nauticalism much used in general conversation.

Sea Breeze. The sailor's name for a drink of beer or ale, as distinguished from 'a close reef' — strong drink.

Seeing the Look. Noting a family resemblance; usually applied in the case of children to parents or to other ancestors. We speak of seeing the 'Folger look' or the 'Starbuck look.'

Serve. To mend or repair any broken article by winding with cord. A fine art as practiced by the sailors.

Set Sail. To start, to depart, to 'get under way.' It is not in the literal or formal use of these terms that our interest lies, but in their every-day figurative use, as 'it's time to set sail for home,' or, on the occasion of a picnic or a cruise, 'there were so many things to do we didn't "set sail," or "get under way" till the middle of the forenoon.'

She Rig. A contemptuous term, reflecting on the weaker sex, applied to anything which is not properly made, set up, or put together.

Ship. As a verb, meaning to hire or to be hired to work.

Ship Shape. Implying nautical skill and efficiency. 'Everything ship shape' means all in perfect order and condition.

Shirt on a Handspike. An ill-fitting garment, or one that is too large, is said to fit like a shirt on a handspike.

Shooler. The old English verb 'shool' is rarely heard, but its derivative, 'Shooler,' is still used occasionally, and is applied to any one who likes to roam about the shores or over the commons in search of a 'mess' or a 'voyage' of fish, clams, berries or game, or for any other object.

Sign Articles. To make an agreement or contract of any kind.

Simper. A curious term for a tea-party given by a captain's wife to other captains' wives aboard ship.

Skimming Slicks. Securing the full limit of return from any effort. Originally a whaling term, but a 'slick,' as used by the islanders now, refers to the smooth, oily patches often seen on the sea over a school of blue-fish, mackerel or other surface-feeding fish, and which exudes from the small fish or 'bait' on which the school are feeding. The full significance of this term will be recognized if one stops to think of the labor necessary to skim the slick and get all there is in it.

Skoodle. To squat or crouch down; rarely heard now, though in common use fifty years ago.

Slatch. A good English word, though somewhat old-fashioned; literally an interval of good weather in an otherwise stormy period; but Nantucketers use it also to express a brief respite from labor or duty. An old-time Nantucket housewife, in making a neighborly call during the forenoon, might have said: 'I had a little "slatch" in my work, so I thought I'd leave Melinda to "tend the kettle halyards," and "clip in" for a few minutes.'

Sliver (as a verb, pronounced with a long *i*). To cut each side of a fish off clear of the bone, making two filets, as they are now called.

Slops. Sailors' garments. Hence the 'slop chest.'

Slurrup. A shiftless, untidy woman; a slattern. The adjective 'slurrupy' was also used to describe such a person.

Smear. Storm clouds. We say: 'it's kicking up a smear in the southeast.'

Snivver. Here's a queer word, still used occasionally. One says 'I'll be over to your house snivver dinner.' The presumption is that the speaker means 'as soon as ever I have had my dinner.' A good definition would be: immediately after. We have been unable to find any record of the use of this odd term off-island.

So. Enough. An order to stop.

Sound. To inquire into or about, to investigate, as 'I'll

sound him, and see how he feels about it,' or 'You'd better sound it carefully before deciding.' Often used also with the word 'out,' as 'we'll sound it out first.'

Sozzle. To rinse out the mouth. 'Sozzle it round.'

Speak. To communicate with; used in its nautical sense, this verb is always in a transitive form. Not speak with or to a person (as in the ordinary sense), but to speak him or her (with no intervening preposition). As one ship speaks another on the high seas, so one Nantucketer speaks another on the street. As distinguished from 'hailing' — the latter implies distance between the speaker and the speakee, which is not necessarily the case in 'speaking.'

Spell Set. Difficult to define exactly; an islander, delayed by annoying circumstances from accomplishing any object in view, will say there was a 'spell set' against him. It would seem to have some connection with the tides or currents.

Splice the Main Brace. Old English nauticalism for taking a drink; always understood, afloat or ashore, by the bibulous brotherhood.

Squantum. Doubtless of Indian origin; the Nantucketer's name for a party outing or picnic — differing from a 'rantum scoot' (see before) in that a squantum usually implies some definite destination for the cruise. It has been suggested that this term may have been borrowed from Boston, as Squantum is the name of a peninsular jutting into the harbor about 6 miles south of the city, formerly a favorite resort for a day's picnic outing.

Square the Yards. To settle up, to balance an account.

Stand Off. To keep away, to avoid; as a ship stands off from the shore; 'stand-offish' is much used as an adjective to imply exclusiveness.

Steer Clear. To shun, to avoid, to keep away from, to avoid colliding with; one of those nautical expressions which is in universal use ashore.

Sticking Tommy. An old-time candlestick with a spur on one side, so it could be stuck into the wall to furnish light at any point wanted.

Stingaree. A name given to an annoyingly persistent person.

Straight Wake. A bee line; as 'the lad made a straight wake for home.'

Strams. Sometimes children, but more specifically, we think, applied to girls who are tomboys.

Strange Sail. Any stranger within our gates is so referred to.

Struck by a Squall. Demolished or wrecked by the elements or by any accidental means; anything which is in a tumbledown, dilapidated condition is said to look as if it had been struck by a squall.

Struck with the Dry Wilt. A person who looks seedy from illness or other cause is referred to as looking as though he was struck with the dry wilt.

Tack. To progress in an uneven course, as a boat or vessel against a head wind.

Tack Ship. The same as tack, but often used like 'come about' to indicate a change of course.

Take. The result or proceeds of a voyage.

Taken Aback. Surprised, astonished, dumbfounded; from a ship catching the wind on the wrong side of its sails, when it is said to be 'taken aback.'

Take in Slack. To gather in the loose end; hence to render minor assistance in any operation.

Taking a Lunar. To look about, to observe conditions, from the maritime custom of taking a lunar observation. Many old Nantucketers step outdoors every night and 'take a lunar' before 'turning in.'

Talking Tacks Aboard. Loquacious, verbose.

Tall as the Mainmast. Said of a very tall person.

There She Blows! The lookout's cry on sighting a whale; hence often used by people of a whaling community like ours to denote the first sight of a thing. Many Nantucketers to-day use this expression when they hear the steamboat whistle.

There She Breaches (breaks water), *There She White Waters*, *There Goes Flukes* (the tail), etc. All these various cries of

the lookout, as he watched the whale while preparations were being made for its pursuit, are quoted by the old-timers on the least provocation when any of them can be made to fit the occasion.

This Latitude. This vicinity or neighborhood. Meeting an acquaintance in some unaccustomed part of the town the islander asks, 'What are you doing in this latitude?' or 'Aren't you out of your latitude?'

Three Sheets in the Wind. Still another name for drunk. To be very drunk was to be 'three sheets in the wind and the other shivering.'

Tivis. To wander aimlessly about.

Tooing. Busy to no purpose — 'only tooing round.'

Top Up Your Boom. Get ready to go; from the custom of hoisting on the topping-lift of a fore and aft sail, before hoisting the sail itself.

Towno! A very ancient term in Nantucket, being the call for help from town raised by the lookout from the shore whaling stations when whales were sighted.

Turn In and *Turn Out.* The sailor's universal terms for going to bed and getting up. Most island men and boys prefer this form to 'retire' and 'rise.'

Traipse or *Trapes.* One of the survivals from old-time speech, meaning to gad or gallivant on the street. (See same under 'Some Queer Words We Use' at end of this list.)

Trim. To load evenly, as a good sailor would 'trim' a boat. Also, to keep in the middle of the boat so it will ride on an 'even keel.'

Trim Sail. To so order affairs as to meet conditions — as to 'trim sail according to your means,' that is, to buy only as you can afford.

Trottleoxing. Gadding about, similar to traipsing.

Two Lamps Burning and No Ship at Sea. An old saying used as a rebuke for extravagance of any kind.

Under Way. Moving, getting headway on; sometimes written (incorrectly, we think) under weigh.

Under the Window. By, at, or beside the window seems to

be preferred by off-islanders, but your true Nantucketer still sits 'under' the window, and 'watches the pass.'

Up Scuttle. On the 'walk' or roof, so named from the trap-door in the roof, which was called the scuttle.

Veer and Haul. To 'back and fill,' to vacillate, like a changeable wind.

Voyage. To the old-time resident every expedition is a voyage, and whatever results from the voyage is also a voyage. The term, so used, has come down from the whaling days, when the number of barrels of oil secured determined whether it had been a good or a poor voyage. So to-day, if one goes clamming, fishing, hunting or berrying, the result of his efforts is the 'voyage,' and on his return, he is asked, 'What kind of a voyage have you had?' or 'Did you have a good voyage?'

Wadgetty. Fidgety; nervous.

Walk. A raised platform on the roof of many old Nantucket houses, from which to look off to sea. *Never* called 'Widow's Walk,' 'Captain's Walk,' or 'Whale Walk,' as often written nowadays, but *always* just 'the walk.' Writers and others please note.

Watch the Pass. A never-failing source of enjoyment to a true Nantucketer. Fortunate is he (and especially she) who lives on one of the main avenues of travel, where the opportunity for this diversion is greatest.

Watcher. One who sits up at night with a sick person, and attends to his or her wants. In the old days there were no trained nurses, and, anyway, a nurse had to do only with babies, or possibly with children. The invalid was usually cared for by a member of the family during the day, but at night a 'watcher' (sometimes hired, but more often a volunteer) came in and took charge. After a death, a watcher always sat up with 'the remains' each night until the funeral.

Weather. This word had several meanings in addition to its ordinary significance. As an adjective, it meant 'windward,' as the 'weather bow,' or the 'weather side'

of anything. As a verb it meant to get safely by, as, of a sick person, 'if he weathers the night, he may pull through'; or, in a financial sense, 'if he weathers this year, he may succeed in the end,' etc.

Weather Eye Peeled. Alert, on the watch.

When the Spirit Moves. A Quaker term. No one was supposed to 'speak in meeting' unless the Spirit moved. Hence Nantucketers use the term to indicate that they will do a thing when or if the Spirit moves, that is, when or if the inspiration comes.

Where Do You Hail From? What is your 'home port' or place of residence?

Whick-Whack. To dash hither and yon, as 'He was whick-whacking back and forth, from house to barn and from barn to house, all day.'

Whittle. To annoy, to tease, to pester; also sometimes to be nervous and uneasy (see same under 'Some Queer Words We Use,' at end of this list).

Wide Berth. Plenty of room; to give a person or a thing a wide berth is to shun or avoid him; to keep well away from.

Wilcox. To pass a restless, uneasy, sleepless night. The expression 'I wilcoxed all night long' is often heard even now. (See same under 'Some Queer Words We Use,' following this list.)

Wild as a Tuckernuck Steer. Wild, harum-scarum. Many beef cattle were formerly raised on the island of Tuckernuck, and their antics, when brought into the gay metropolis of Nantucket town, probably gave rise to this expression.

Wild Fowl Flavor. Tasty and appetizing food was said to 'have a real wild fowl flavor.' The dish in question might be a pie or any kind of food, but the expression was used in a complimentary sense, meaning good, 'moreish.'

Witchet. Said of sailor's beef, or 'salt horse,' 'As tough as witchet,' whatever that may be.

Wonders. Local name for doughnuts.

WEATHER SAYINGS

Mark Twain says somewhere, speaking of the weather, that it's a thing we are always talking about, but nobody ever seems to *do* anything about it. Could Mark have spent a winter on Nantucket, he might have thought there were times when we talked of little else; and with reason, perhaps, for it is a matter of vital consequence to us and to all our interests. Many Nantucketers specialize on the subject. The first thing they do on rising in the morning is to 'take an observation.' Breakfast has no interest for them till they have looked at the thermometer, the barometer, the nearest weather vane, and the sky overhead. This done, plans for the day may be considered. There is much weather lore among them. Any old-timer can predict the weather for twenty-four or even forty-eight hours ahead; and sometimes he hits it right, as might naturally be expected. Perseverance will accomplish anything.

In former times there were many wise saws concerning the weather, and some of them are still current among the islanders. Yet it is a curious thing that if one starts out to make a collection of such sayings, he cannot find any one who can remember offhand more than two or three — usually the same ones. Probably some one has a collection of such sayings, but if so, the compilers have been unable to locate it. A few, however, have been jotted down, some of which are known to be very old.

One of the things which every old-time Nantucketer recognizes at sight is the particular kind of a day which is known as a 'weather breeder.' It is always a perfect day, but not every perfect day is necessarily a weather breeder. It is difficult to describe, and still more difficult, to the uninitiated, at

least, to recognize. The saying, 'There's always a calm before a storm,' is known the world over, and the expression has its counterpart in all languages. It may be applied to a day as well as an hour. Hence the 'weather breeder' — a fair, calm day, with a cloudless sky, or at most a few fleecy white wisps far up in the blue, when everything on the horizon, as we say, 'looms' and distant objects stand out clearly, when Pocomo Head and Great Point hang suspended 'twixt sea and sky, and even Cape Cod may be visible in mirage. Everything on or near the water is clearly and sharply reflected. The wind is usually, but not always, from the east, for though 'tis said

'When the wind is in the east
'Tis good for neither man nor beast,'

we often have some beautiful weather when the wind is in that quarter — a fact which is, we think, not generally recognized. But, as every perfect day is not a weather breeder, neither is every fair day with an east wind such. The unusual clearness of the air is one of the best signs, for

'The further the sight the nearer the rain.'

Toward night there is quite apt to be a 'mackerel sky,' and every sailor knows

'Mackerel scales,
Furl your sails.'

And if this condition is accompanied or followed by 'mares' tails,' then look out, for

'Mackerel sky and mares' tails
Make lofty ships carry low sails.'

Now watch the barometer, and remember that

'First rise after a low —
Squalls expect and more blow.'

When the expected happens, observe it closely, for

'First the wind and then the rain,
Hoist your topsails up again.'

But

'First the rain and then the wind,
Topsail sheets and halyards mind!'

If it hauls to the south'ard a bit, and blows hard, be prepared for what is to follow, for

'A nor'wester never dies in debt to a southeaster.'

However, take comfort in the fact that, the debt being paid, with interest,

'A howl from the north brings a scream from the east, a whisper from the south, and a song from the west,'

provided, of course, it goes round that way; that is, from north to east, east to south, etc.; but if, on the contrary, the wind 'backs,' that is, changes in the opposite direction, then you may know that it has all to be done over again, for

'Winds that change against the sun
Are always sure to backward run.'

And this never fails, for there can be no settled weather (if there ever is such a thing in this latitude) until the wind has gone round the right way — that is, with the sun. And to the older islanders it is a well-known fact that there is (almost without exception) a dead calm within twenty-four hours before or after the full of the moon.

A knowledge of these simple rules will enable any land-lubber to set up as a weather prophet with quite as much chance of establishing a reputation as if pickled in brine for three-quarters of a century.

The varieties of weather known to Nantucketers

often surprise the inland visitor, who recognizes only two kinds, good and bad. We have fair, good, fine, foul, dirty, nasty, bad, thick, rough, heavy, and several other sorts, including 'owlish' and 'mirogenous,' whatever that may mean. Wind conditions are described as dead calm, stark calm, calm, light, puffy, squally, heavy, single-reef, two-, three-, and close-reef breezes, half-a-gale, gale, hurricane, etc.; or a wind may be described as a six-or eight-knot breeze, and so on. Among those to the manner born, a 'tempest' means a thunderstorm.

BOXING THE COMPASS

We have our own names for the points of the compass. Many writers persist in making the sailorman say 'nor'east' and 'sou'east.' None such ever used the words. He does say 'nor'west' and 'sou'west,' but north is 'no'the,' with a long 'o' and a soft 'th.' Northeast is 'no'theast,' pronounced the same way (the 'no'the' like the verb 'loathe'). South is pronounced with the same soft 'th' (like 'mouth' when used as a verb).

When either north or south is used as an adjective before the noun, however, each takes its ordinary dictionary pronunciation, as a 'north wind,' or the 'south shore.' It is only when used without the noun that the long 'o' sound in 'no'the' and the soft 'th' in both words are heard. Thus we say the wind is 'out southe,' or 'about no'the' — never a 'no'the wind' or the 'southe shore.' It is a curious distinction, for which there seems to be no reason except custom itself. Then we have 'no-no'theast,' and 'sou'-southeast,' but always 'nor'nor'west' and 'sou'-sou'west.' Writers who wish to apply the local color correctly are urged to study these forms carefully,

and not slip up, as most of them do, on such simple matters. 'Southe' is sometimes used as a verb, when speaking of the moon, as 'when the moon southes'; and the word 'easting' is sometimes heard.

UNDERGROUND MOON

And we must not let another lunar phase pass unheeded, as a part of the island's weather curriculum — the 'underground moon.' Here we have a strictly local phase of the orb of night. When the moon makes a change between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock, she is classed as an 'underground moon,' and the claim is made that foul weather is sure to accompany. Careful notes indicate that such conditions do result, but that the rule is not infallible. The *real* 'underground' moon is when that heavenly body makes its change between the time of setting and rising, and between the hours of 12 and 1 o'clock, being at the time below the horizon — or underground. The real weather-wise Nantucketer holds quite tenaciously to the theory.

TID-BITS

It would be a mistake to fail to preserve here the menu known to whalemen in the early days. It will intensify our respect for our forbears, who as lads were eager to risk the loss of all the comforts of home to sail on long voyages, knowing full well what conditions they would be compelled to meet. The mess table of those days was in strong contrast to what is served Jack in these days of tinned food-stuffs, and the 'tar' of to-day is better looked after in every particular, through better national and international laws bearing upon his protection.

LOBSCOUSE

In the old days Lobscouse was a prominent feature of the menu of a whaleship. It was a stew of soaked hard-tack, pork fat, or 'top o' the pot' (grease left after boiling 'salt horse' — beef), or any sort of 'slush' (sailor's term for grease), boiled with molasses and water.

POTATO SCOUSE

was the same as above, excepting that potatoes were substituted for hard-tack.

DANDY FUNK

This appears to have been a dish of class on shipboard, made of powdered hard-tack, molasses and water and baked in the oven — evidently a sort of pudding.

SALT HORSE

(salted beef) was served twice a week, as was boiled salt pork.

DUFF,

boiled in a cloth, was on the menu twice weekly, and one day of the seven gingerbread was served.

MEAL AND MOLASSES

Scalded yellow meal with molasses was served daily, and occasionally salt fish and potatoes.

Whale scraps were occasionally eaten, and porpoise meat, and sometimes fresh fish found place on the festive board; and when they were trying out a whale, advantage was taken of the abundance of hot fat to do more or less frying in the try-pots.

To the whaleman, salt beef was always 'meat,'

while pork was pork. As some preferred one and some the other, a sailor would frequently offer to swap his 'meat' for his mess-mate's pork, or vice versa. Whalemen used to say they varied their diet by having salt horse and hard-tack one meal, and hard-tack and salt horse the next, and so on.

SOME QUEER WORDS WE USE

To the student of etymology the speech of the Nantucket people offers an interesting field. Here he will encounter many unusual words and expressions rarely found elsewhere outside of the dictionary, and not always there, yet frequently used and perfectly understood by the older generation of islanders.

In an essay entitled 'Shakespeare's Americanisms,' printed in the 'Atlantic Monthly' some years ago, the late Henry Cabot Lodge answers some of the English critics who have referred rather slurringly to certain alleged innovations in the mother tongue as 'Americanisms,' and proves conclusively, by quotations from Shakespeare and his contemporaries, that many of the terms objected to are simply survivals of well-recognized forms which were in common use in the Elizabethan age or even earlier. One such word quoted by Mr. Lodge is 'fleet,' used as a verb, which he had often noted in Nantucket. The primary definition of this word, according to the Century Dictionary, is 'to move quickly,' but as it survives with us, it is used more in its second sense, 'to move over, to move along,' or, in the transitive form, 'to change the place of.' An excellent example is contained in the story of a Quaker minister, who, noting that a considerable part of his scattered congregation occupied the back seats, began his discourse by saying:

'Come, fleet for'ard, friends; there's too much weight aft.' Curiously enough the Century Dictionary's example is almost exactly similar, to wit: 'To fleet aft the crew of a whale boat, that by their weight they may help to keep the head of the boat up when a whale is sounding.'

So when some of our hypercritical visitors are inclined to poke a bit of fun at us for using certain 'outlandish' words, it may be wiser for them to first consult the dictionary and make sure that the word in question is not some rather choice bit of pure old English speech.

It may be of interest to consider a few of the more common examples of such words, many of which are given in our list of 'Expressions and Idioms.' Few if any of them could yet be considered obsolete, and the worst that could be said of any of them is that they are more or less archaic. There is space to mention only a few, which we have arranged alphabetically. Almost any old Nantucketer can add one or more to the list.

Clip. A Nantucketer would say, 'I'll just "clip" in to Mary's on the way back.' One meaning of the verb clip is to move quickly, and as our use of this term implies haste, or a hurried call, it is doubtless derived from that meaning.

Coof, the Century defines as 'a lout, a coward.' (Scotch.) Originally the word was without doubt used in a somewhat contemptuous sense, and to the resident of a prosperous urban community of ten thousand people, such as Nantucket was seventy or eighty years ago, visitors from Cape Cod (to whom the term was originally applied) might well have seemed loutish. Gradually the word came to be ap-

plied to any off-islander and lost most of its contemptuous significance, implying only a slight inferiority by reason of the accident of birth or residence elsewhere than on the island. It is a good English word, which is the main point.

Diddledees. A curious old word used for pine needles. This has always been something of a puzzle, but the Century again helps us out: 'Diddledees — a shrub in the Falkland Islands and other Antarctic regions used for fuel.' As pine needles have been used as 'kindlings' by the Nantucket people for generations past, may it not be that the word was brought from the Antarctic by the whalers? In the absence of any better explanation of the origin of the term, this theory is advanced for what it may be worth.

Flax, as a verb. The Century gives as an example 'flax around,' which is just the way Nantucket people use it, meaning to gad about, or to hustle.

Fudge. Long before its use as a noun, applied to a certain kind of candy, our ancestors used this word as a verb, meaning to bother or plague, to fool, or something like the term 'bamboozle.' There is a story of an old Quaker grocer who sent word to a customer who had complained of the butter he sent her that 'it was good butter, and he would not be fudged by women.' Another story tells of a Quaker who was asked to sell half of a two-cent pickle for one cent. His reply was, 'Thee get along now, thee can't fudge me.' There is a dictionary definition, 'to prod with a stick,' from which the local use of the term may have been derived, but it is a trifle obscure.

Gam. Originally 'a school of whales,' from which it was quite natural the whalemen should have applied it to a social visit between ships, which is one of the Century's definitions.

Gally. Though this word has survived principally in the perfect participle form, 'gallied,' it was also used in the present and other tenses. It is believed to be a variation, recognized in the dictionary, of the good old English verb gallow, to frighten or terrify. 'The wrathful skies gallow the very wanderers of the dark.' — Shakespeare.

Meeching is another word often noted, though not strictly local. The dictionary gives 'skulking, sneaking, mean,' which is just the sense we give it in Nantucket.

Muster. Not as applied to the military, but to any group or assemblage of people, as 'quite a muster,' which is a secondary definition of the term in the dictionary, and, we think, rather unusual 'off-island.'

Perceive. No word causes more comment, perhaps, among our visitors than this; not of course the word itself, but the way Nantucketers use it. It is difficult to define the exact shade of difference between our use of the word and that of others. With us it means something more than to see or discern, or even to notice. It means rather to grasp or 'take in.' For example, if one speaks to an old islander, he or she, as recognition dawns, says: 'Oh, how do you do! I didn't perceive you at first.' It is perfectly obvious that he saw you, but it required something more, the use of some other sense or senses, and possibly some slight lapse of time, to perceive you. In view of this use of the word, the Century Dictionary definition is very interesting: 'to become aware of, to have knowledge of.' And again 'specifically, to come to know through the organs of sense.... When we perceive, the object is actually before us, appealing to various sense organs.' Is it not curious that this exact dis-

tinction, subtle as it is, should have survived among us, to be frequently remarked upon by outsiders?

Perceivance. In a similar sense this word still persists in the speech of Nantucketers. Is it often heard elsewhere? The dictionary gives an example from Milton: 'The senses and common perceivance carry this message to the soul.' When a Nantucket woman of the old régime wishes to convey the idea that she scornfully ignored some slighting remark, she says with dignity: 'Yes, I heard it, but I took no perceivance of it.'

Pernickety. When a Nantucket person calls another pernickety, it strikes an outsider as provincial or even as if the word might have been coined for the occasion; but again the Century justifies us as follows: 'Pernickety — precise in trifles, fussily particular, especially about dress or trifles,' which is exactly how we use the term. The word is occasionally heard elsewhere, but rarely nowadays, we think, outside of New England or among descendants of New Englanders.

Porch. Applied to an ell kitchen. A summer cottager who instructed the native man-of-all-work to sweep and clean the porch accused him of stupidity when she returned an hour or two later to find her kitchen nicely cleaned, while the veranda remained in the same disorder as when she went out. Each knew what a porch was, but each had something quite different in mind. The word porch is defined as 'a covered way or entrance, whether enclosed or unenclosed.' In ecclesiastical architecture, where it presumably originated, it describes the covered and usually enclosed entrance built on to a church or cathedral — for all the world, in general outline and

appearance, like the ell kitchen of a typical old Nantucket house, succeeding the 'lean-to' in the very old ones. The use of the word as applied to a veranda is modern United States, and more or less local at that. So the Nantucketer may have been nearer right than his employer. The room over this style of kitchen was always 'the porch chamber.'

Scrimshont. A curious word, of which the original is said to have been scrimshaw. The dictionary defines it in effect as any fine or delicate mechanical handiwork, especially the carving on shells or ivory done by sailors. Many fine examples of 'scrimshonting' may still be seen in some of the old Nantucket homes, and the Historical Association has some excellent specimens in its collection.

Scrouge is another survival, meaning 'to squeeze, to press, to crowd,' especially in a financial way, as by a creditor in dealing with a debtor. Did Dickens, perhaps, have it in mind when he named his central character in the 'Christmas Carol'?

Shool, according to the dictionary, means 'to saunter about, to loiter idly' — a favorite pastime with the 'shooler,' who is a well-known character in the local vernacular. An Irish writer friend tells us this word was in common use in just this sense in his boyhood in Tipperary.

Slatch. A word still in quite common use on the island among the older people. It means 'a short gleam of fine weather, an interval in a storm.' When caught away from home in a heavy rain, we plan, if possible, to 'wait for a slatch' before starting to return. The term is also sometimes used in the sense of a respite from labor, as 'I had a slatch in my work, and I thought I'd run over and see you.'

Sliver (pronounced with a long *i*). Ask your city fish man to sliver a flounder, a plaice fish or a scup for you, and there's one chance in ten, if he's not an old fisherman himself, that he will know what you mean; yet the dictionary defines it exactly: 'to cut each side of a fish away in one piece from the head to the tail, which is the only proper way to clean either of the fish mentioned, as every Nantucketer knows.'

Stir, as a noun. This may be, strictly speaking, less distinctively local than some of the other terms, but it is doubtful if it is used as frequently in this sense elsewhere as here. One says, for instance, 'I've been down town, but there isn't much stir.' The word means 'activity, bustle, movement, action, commotion, excitement' — all of which are included in the thing which is lacking in the sentence quoted.

Traipse, or *trapes*, is another verb which Nantucketers still use frequently in the exact sense authorized by the Century: 'To gad or flount about idly.' It includes a little of the meaning of both 'flax' and 'shool' above given, with something added, but it implies something rather less reputable than either of those terms. To say that a woman 'traipses' up and down Main street comes dangerously near slander on our island.

Whittle. There seems to be no good authority for our use of this word, meaning to fuss, to get uneasy; also, sometimes, to tease, to pester. One says, 'Well, it's time to go. Mother'll be whittling.' What child of a Nantucket mother hasn't been told, when he had exhausted her patience to the point of exasperation by teasing for something, 'Oh, stop your whittling!'

Many other words are less easy to place, though every old Nantucketer will recognize some if not all of them.

Bungy. 'Where you going?' 'I'm going to Bungy.' What and where is Bungy? The impression seems to be that the reply is a rather saucy one — almost as if to say, 'None of your business.'

Flink. 'I'm going out on a flink,' meaning a good time. May it be a corruption of 'fling' sometimes used in a similar sense?

Huddle. An old-time name for a dance or ball. All the old-timers will recall 'Handy's huddles.'

Hyorky. See 'Expressions and Idioms.' Origin obscure.

Muckle. See 'Expressions and Idioms.'

Rantum-scoot. Does it mean to scoot at random? That is the implication of the term, as used. Who knows?

Skoodle. To crouch, to squat. There seems to be no authority for this, though long in common use.

Slurrup. A slattern; the adjective was 'slurrupy.' There is a definition (Provincial English) of slur, meaning 'mud, especially thin, washy mud.' A possible connection suggests itself.

Strams. Children; not common, but apparently authentic. Whence came it?

Wilcox. Much used in Nantucket formerly, to describe an uneasy, sleepless night. To this day the old folks (and some of the young ones) say: 'I couldn't sleep. I wilcoxed all night long.' It has been suggested that the term originated with a story of some family named Wilcox who, having an overplus of company one night, slept four or five in a bed, with the natural result that no one slept at all.

Unlike most rural New-Englanders, including even Cape Cod coofs, your Nantucketer never 'cal'lates,' though some writers have made him do so, by implication, in their attempts to reproduce the local dialect. Nor does he, like the Southerner, 'reckon.' Most assuredly he never, like the Englishman, 'fancies.' He does sometimes 'guess' (which, by the way, is one of the 'Americanisms' which Mr. Lodge proves by several examples has a good Shakespearean origin and authority); but he employs a much more elegant and dignified phrase than either of these. He 'presumes likely.' That is his particular contribution to the many variations of the word think. He prefaces most of his opinions with the phrase, as 'I presume likely the boat will be late to-night'; and if you ask him almost any question requiring anything short of a positively affirmative reply, he answers it, 'I presume likely.' There is something akin to the Scotchman's well-known reluctance to make any unqualifiedly positive statement in the Nantucketer's use of this phrase, and he keeps it handy for all occasions.

Nantucketers never sit at the window or by the window, but always 'under' the window. There is perhaps no phrase which is more often noted in our speech than this, and we who use it are often asked to explain or even to demonstrate just how we sit under the window. The answer is, obviously, that as Nantucket windows are usually rather high from the floor, as we sit by or at one of them, we are under them, just as the wall paper or the baseboard, or even the floor, for that matter, is under them — which only goes to prove that whatever may be said of us, we are never in the wrong. Let him who can prove the contrary.

We might go on indefinitely citing peculiarities of the local dialect, if such a term may be used in this

connection; but it would need another book to pursue the subject to its limits, and the limitations of our space forbid. But we cannot close without a word about what is known as 'the Nantucket yes marm,' which, after all, is no more Nantucket than Cape Cod, or anywhere else, for that matter; though we are justly accused of using it more generally and more universally, perhaps, than other people. Though rather informal, it is good English, strange to say. To refer once more to our Century Dictionary, we find 'h'm-h'm — a murmur of assent.' Nantucketers do not say 'h'm-h'm,' but 'm'm-h'm' — that is, there is no aspirated sound on the first syllable, but only on the second. The lips are kept tightly closed, and the sound comes through the nose. One has only to listen to a modern Nantucketer 'murmuring assent' over the telephone to realize how fixed the habit is with all of us.

CHAPTER XI

FLOTSAM AND JETSAM

A 'SCONSETER'S WILL

THIS manuscript will was found in an old sea-chest in a house in Siasconset some years ago.

SIASCONSET, *May* 30th, 1841

I, Obed Gardner, master mariner, now living at 'Sconset, write down this will.

Item. I have cruised with my wife, Huldy Jane, since 1811. We signed articles in town before the preacher on Independence Day. I want her and my oldest boy Jotham to be Captain and Mate in bringing to port whatever I leave and to see that every one of the crew gets the lay as writ down on this paper. I put mother in command. I know sheel be Captain anyway, for six months after we started on our life cruise I found out that I was mate and she was master. I don't mean that she ever mutinied, but I no that whenever we didn't agree she always manoovred to work to windward. May be it is all right for she could sail closer to wind than I could and could manage the crew of little ones that she had as much to do with shipping as I did. She always wanted me to do the swearin' when there was any trouble. I no that when she and Jotham break bulk the cargo will be got out as well as I could do it myself.

Item. In 1838 Captain Ichabod Worth got tired of the old Nancy Rotch and wanted to get rid of her so he got me to take a piece of her. When I saw her last she was lyin' at the wharf in Valparaiso more'n half full. I mean she was more'n half full of oil. Mother never liked her. I want Jotham to have that piece as extra pay for what he does in settlin' up my affairs for heel have to steer things while mother is takin' observations, watchin the weather and lookin over things below deck.

Item. I want mother to have the house on Union street

until she goes aloft. Then I want it to go to the children in equal lays and if any child dies I want the lay of the parent to go to the parent's young ones. But I don't want my daughter Belindy to have anythin as long as her husband is livin. He is a lubber, but she has been cruisin with him for years. I haven't got anything agin him, but he doesn't no how to navigate the sea of life. I do believe if he wanted to stop a leak board ship it would be just like him to go into the hold with an auger and bore a hole threw the plankin to let the bilge water out into the sea. But Belindy likes him. Thas just like a woman. If I should give the lay out and out to her, I am afraid her husband would manoover to get hold of it. So I want mother and Jotham to put it out at interest, and give what comes out of it to her until her husband ships for a corpse below decks in the grave yard. Then she can take the lay and do what she wants with it.

Item. I dont want my son Ezry to have anything from what I leave. All the children except him was good ones. They looked out for their mother and me. He didnt take after either of us except the time he took after me with a fid and hit me over the starbord eye. He new what was to come and was smart enough to jump into Johnny Gibbs catboat, hawl in the sheet and steer for the continent. When he got to Bedford he shipped as a boat steerer on the old Falcon. I was glad he did. I don't no where he is now but I herd he was master of a steamboat runnin between Canton and Whampoa. I havent got any use for him and I guess he hasnt any use for me. The black eye he gave me is outlawed and I dont now lay anythin up agin him for that.

Item. I want mother and Jotham to settle up things as soon as they can break bulk, and make a fair divide between the children. But don't forget what I have writ down about mother and Belindy. I don't think Belindys husband will make any fuss about the way I have taken care of her unless she runs head on the shoals of a lawyers office. Then look out for squalls. I hope shell stand off if she sees a lawyer comin thort her bows.

Item. I want mother to have half of what comes from what is left of my property besides the house in Union street. She deserves it. Every time I was around the Horn she did her duty to the young ones and I want her to have enough to live on until she goes aloft. Then I want her lay to go to the children in equal pieces except that Belindy shall only have what comes from it until her husband dies. If mother wants to marry again thats her business. I never did like to cruise without a mate, and I guess she wouldn't like to either.

OBED GARDNER,
Master Mariner

Captain Obed Gardner ast us into his porch and opened his locker. He then ast us to take a drink of rum that was fetched to him from Boston by Captain George Swain in his schooner. We done so. It was a masterly warmin to our insides. Then he pulled this paper out of his pea jacket and signed it and said it was his will and he ast us to sign it as witnesses. We done so, then he ast one of us to write down what took place and as they said I was more of a skoller than they, I did so.

JETHRO COFFIN, 2ND,
ELEASUR PADDACK,
SHUBAEL STARBUCK.

The will was nêver presented in court for probate, because the turn of events made it unnecessary. The Nancy Rotch returned and was sold for a good price. Belindy's husband was drowned by the upsetting of his dory on Miacomet Rip. Ezra returned from China, prosperous and anxious to make amends for past shortcomings, and no one was more delighted to see him than Cap'n Obed. When the latter died, it was at Ezra's suggestion that the whole estate was given to the widow during her lifetime. After her death, at the age of 92, it was divided among the children, but Ezry gave his 'lay' to Belindy's oldest boy, who had been named after him.

LIFE ON A 'HEN FRIGATE'

Sympathy is sometimes expressed for the wives of some of the whaling captains who accompanied their husbands on long Pacific voyages. While it is true that they endured many hardships and privations, from all we can learn many loyal wives voluntarily chose the life to the otherwise long separation from their husbands. As a case in point, it is related that soon after Captain Charles Grant arrived home in 1849 from a successful voyage in the Walter Scott, as he and his good wife sat by the fire one evening, there came a knock at the door. As the Captain rose to answer it, his wife said: 'Charles, if that's Mr. Macy after you to go whaling, you ship me, too.' Mrs. Grant was duly 'shipped,' and in August of that year they sailed together in the Potomac. In the following December their first son was born at Pitcairn Island, famous as the home of the mutineers of the Bounty. On their next voyage, in the Mohawk, sailing in 1854, a daughter was born at Bay of Islands, and later in the same voyage another son, still living at this writing, first saw the light at Apia, Island of Opolu, in the Navigator Group, now better known as the Samoan Islands.

Captain Grant lived to be ninety-one years and eight months old, having spent fifty-six years of his life on a whale ship. He is said to have brought home more sperm oil than any other whaleman who ever lived.

Benjamin Franklin's mother was Abiah Folger, daughter of Peter Folger, one of the early settlers of Nantucket. Benjamin just missed being born on the island, his parents having removed to Boston only a few months before he came into the world. In an

interesting letter to his cousin, Keziah Coffin, Benjamin suggested these two epitaphs, one for his parents and the second for himself.

Josiah Franklin
And Abiah, his wife,
Lie here interred.
They lived loveingly together in Wedlock
Fifety-five Years
And without an Estate or gainfull Imployment
by constant Labour and honest Industry
With God's Blessing
Maintained a large Family comfortably and
brought up thirteen Children and seven
Grandchildren
Reputably.
From this Instance Reader
be encouraged to Dilligence in thy Calling
And distrust not Providence.
He was a Pious and Prudent Man
She was a diligent and Virtuous Woman
Their youngest Son
In filial Regard to their Memory
Places this Stone —
J. F. born 1655 died 1744
A. F. born 1666 died 1752

The Body of B. Franklin
Printer
Like the Cover of an old Book
Its Contents torn out
And stript of its Lettering and Gilding
Lies here Food for Worms
But the Work shall not be lost
It will (as he believes) appear once more
In a new and more beautiful Edition
Corrected and Amended
By the Author.
He was born Jan. 6, 1706. And
died 17 —.

NON PERSONA GRATA

Here is a copy of an official warrant issued by the Selectmen of Sherborn, in 1738:

Nantucket, ss. To the Constables of the Town of Sherborn, or either of them, &c:

Information being made to us, the subscribers, that Marther Broadbrook of the County of Barnstable is landed into this town in order to take up her abode here, which is like to be of ill consequence if not timely prevented:

These are therefore to order you or either of you to warn the said Marther Broadbrook immediately to depart this town or to expect the severity of the law in that case made and provided, and make Return of this order to either of us as soon as may be.

The 22nd of the 6th month, 1738.

JABEZ BUNKER,
NATHAN FOLGER,
THOMAS MACY,
RICHARD COFFIN,
JOHN MACY,
PAUL STARBUCK,
EBENEZER BARNARD,
Selectmen.

On the back of this order is the following endorsement:

Nantucket, Sherborn, August 29, 1738, Pursuant to this warrant this day warned the within Marther Broadbrook. (The signature is illegible.)